





**SOURCES OF  
THE HISTORY OF INDIA**







# **SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF INDIA**

**VOLUME No.—III**

*Edited by*

**S. P. SEN**

*Director*

**INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL STUDIES**



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## PREFACE

THE INSTITUTE feels a sense of great pleasure in offering to the scholars and general readers interested in India's history and historiography the third volume in the series—*Sources of the History of India*—planned and sponsored by the Institute some years ago. The present volume is the third in the series of a multi-volumed project on the Sources of the History of India covering the entire Indian sub-continent and all the three broad periods of its history—ancient, medieval and modern.

As observed in the Preface to the first volume in the Series published in 1978 by the Founder-Director of the Institute, Dr. S. P. Sen, to whose insight and constructive imagination the Project owes its initiation :

"It is intended to fill up a great void in Indian historiography...Our primary objective in undertaking this multi-volumed project is to help advanced students of history, researchers and teachers in getting to know the wealth of historical source-material lying scattered in different parts of the country and in different languages."

The present volume, like the two preceding ones in the series, conforms to the objective laid down and seeks to highlight the nature and extent of source-material of various categories—literary, epigraphic, numismatic, archaeological, written records—in regard to three distinct regions of India. It is a survey and assessment of sources on the history of Assam, Sikkim and Tamilnadu. It is pleasing to recall that the two earlier volumes have dealt with similar sources relative to the history of nine different states, viz., Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, Rajasthan, Haryana, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. These have been well-received in the scholarly world and they form a section of prized collection in the libraries of universities, colleges and other academies throughout India.



This series, it is hoped, will help the historians to reconstruct the past and to ascertain the extent of this reconstruction attained so far, and will also enable them to get to know the material that still remain to be utilized or even uncovered. It is unfortunate but true that many source-materials, particularly paper objects concerning the late medieval and modern periods of our history, still lie either in a state of callous neglect, tending to disintegrate at an appallingly fast rate, or in some cases, still untraced, being in the custody of individuals or institutions which are not equipped with any facilities of their own for proper preservation. The laws governing the Archives till now leave out a large category of important sources from their orbit. And yet these materials, like reports, proceedings and correspondences of autonomous organisations, judicial records, records in the possession of municipal bodies which do not find their way to the Archives, are no less important than those which lie within the jurisdiction of our Archives. Access to these materials, scattered at different places, is difficult, if not impossible. Several of our contributors had had the rare privilege of access to some documents and sources which, till now, have not been made much use of, if at all.

In the circumstances, the value and need of reconstructing the sources, such as are available at present, cannot be too strongly emphasised. The volumes, as such, are a right step taken at the right time. If our experiences with the first two volumes, are an index of their popularity, the present volume as well as the successor-volumes will be welcomed as indispensable aids to the study of our history, its people and culture in a manner and on a scale not explored before. While we bring, with all the earnestness at our command, to the notice of the authorities concerned, the urgent need to adopt immediate and effective steps for (a) preparation of comprehensive survey of all extant materials, and (b) proper preservation and utilisation of archaeological and literary materials lying scattered all over the country, we claim that, notwithstanding the difficulties referred to here, the multi-volumed project to which the Institute is committed, will go a long way in furthering the scope and extent of our knowledge on the sources of our own history and the extent of their utilisation.



This project, by any standard, is a big one. It aims at covering all the States and the Union Territories of India. By its nature it requires close co-operative efforts of scholars all over the country with specialised study on their own chosen region or regions to their credit. We have been singularly fortunate, as the contents will show, in the unstinted help that a large number of competent scholars have extended to the Institute in the implementation of its grand project.

With a view to making, as far as practicable, an exhaustive study of the source-material dating back to days of antiquity and coming down to present times, available in any region or state and written in different languages and also to ensuring uniformity in treatment of the subject we had formulated a broad pattern for the contributors to follow. We indicate below the guide-lines for the information of the readers, and to enable them to purposefully follow each of the papers included in the volumes, irrespective of the region or the period dealt with :

- I. Nature of the source-material in general
- II. Classification of source-material
- III. A critical review of the extent and dependability of the different categories of source-material
- IV. The extent to which the source-material has been utilised by historians and the fields which remain to be covered
- V. Any problem or difficulty in using the source-material.

The pattern aimed at is thus not merely a stock-taking of what has been achieved so far, it is also an attempt to indicate to future research workers the fields that till now remain uncovered as well as the source-material still remaining unutilised.

A close look at the trend of research work today will show that the progress so far attained is by no means inconsiderable. Fresh grounds are being traversed and topics not dealt with before or even thought of, have begun to shed new light. But there is no reason for complacency. We cannot possibly escape the unpalatable fact that little or nothing has been done to co-ordinate research activities in a planned way so as to remove the lacunae

from which our study of history still suffers. It is not an uncommon experience to find that while same or similar subjects are being explored simultaneously by several research-workers under the patronage of different universities, no university has till now formulated any co-ordinated programme aimed at planned research involving collective work. Our intention is not to disparage any university. We simply draw attention to what ought to be done and what available indications suggest have little prospect of materialisation within measurable future. Even high-powered bodies with adequate finances at their disposal have not a different story to tell.

The present venture of the Institute, notwithstanding its limited resources, is a humble but sincere effort to put the study of Indian history on a right perspective. This has been rendered possible because of the enthusiastic co-operation of scholars whose love for the Institute matches their devotion to scholastic studies on a co-operative basis.

The present volume deals with three states, namely, Assam, Sikkim and Tamilnadu, as indicated earlier. While the starting point of the survey is common, viz., ancient period of the history of each region and the materials relative to the medieval period, more or less, conform to a common pattern of sources—literary and archaeological, taken in their broadest sense—the materials in regard to the modern period reveal distinctiveness in that the literary sources easily outnumber other relevant categories. This is perhaps inevitable. The number of papers on literary sources, on the whole, exceeds that of the papers reconstructed on archaeological sources. The number of papers on the three regions covering ancient, medieval and modern periods is as follows : Assam 14 papers, Sikkim 9 papers and Tamilnadu 15 papers making a total of 38 articles.

In presenting this volume we cannot claim that it has been possible to remedy the shortcomings to which attention was drawn in the Preface to the two preceding volumes in the series. The shortcomings which persist are mainly three.

Firstly, we cannot claim that all the papers appearing in the present volume strictly conform to the pattern laid down as gener-

al guide lines of the Project. The majority of the papers no doubt conform to the pattern laid down for the purpose of ensuring uniformity of treatment, as far as possible, but some cases reveal deviation from the pattern and are more or less compilation of relevant materials without much critical assessment of their importance and reliability. Such deviations, as our experience shows, cannot possibly be ruled out from a Project involving co-operative efforts needing to be published within a given time.

Secondly, it may strike the readers that in some cases the papers contributed do not offer an exhaustive study of the subject relating to a particular region or period. Several gaps remain. These could be filled in if only additional papers were available. We tried our best and invited papers on topics from scholars competent to deal with them. We waited as long as it was possible when we realised that further waiting would mean inexcusable delay, much beyond the schedule of publication, we were left with no alternative than to offer the volume in its present form. This is again a hurdle which the sponsors of a project based on co-operative efforts often find insurmountable. We do hope our readers will bear with us.

Thirdly, there still remains the scope for criticism on the ground that in selecting the areas to be surveyed under each volume, no attention has been paid to the choice of regions on the criterion of territorial contiguity. Thus as Dr. Sen pointed out in his Preface to the second volume in the series, would have been certainly better if we would have taken four or five states in one contiguous geographical area with a common historical development for each volume of the series. Practical difficulties, also explained in detail in the same Preface, stood in the way of adopting this principle. These difficulties persist. And the present volume has not been planned differently from the plan adopted in regard to the first two volumes. We can only repeat the hope expressed by Dr. Sen "Possibly in the next edition of all the volumes of the Project we shall adopt a more rational policy about distribution of studies and different states in each volume and shall follow the principle of geographical contiguity and similarity of historical development".



While the volumes in the multi-volumed Project covering the entire Indian sub-continent are reasonably expected to be a valuable contribution to the compilation of source-material for Indian history as a whole, as well as an assessment of the importance of each type of source-material and as an indication of the source still awaiting the attention of historians, a peculiar interest attaches itself to each of the three states covered under the present volume. Interest in Assam, the first state, dealt with in the volume, has transcended the limited circle of students of history ; it has stirred indepth thinking at a national plane. The papers contributed on Assam, it is expected, will be greeted with general interest as they place the trends and developments in the history and culture of Assam in proper perspective in the larger and integrated history of India as a whole. The papers on Sikkim which follow next, though less in number, hold out the prospect of enlisting interest of a circle larger than that of pure academicians. The papers on the source-materials on Tamilnadu, are fairly exhaustive, dealing with various aspects of its history and culture, and will acquaint the readers with the rich materials already collected and utilised and also convey to them an idea of the sources yet to be explored and made use of.

I recall with gratitude the financial assistance rendered by the Department of Culture, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India and the State Government of West Bengal, enabling the Institute to present the volume to the reading public.

I take the opportunity to express my gratitude to the contributors of papers whose kind co-operation has made this publication possible. I am thankful to Dr. N. N. Bhattacharyya of the Calcutta University, Professor Amitabha Mukherjee, Dr. P. K. Bhattacharyya and Dr. Amalendu De of the Jadavpur University, for their kind help in editing the papers. I also owe my thanks to Mrs. Minati Chattopadhyaya, Registrar of the Institute, for the constant help she has rendered to me in the preparation of the volume. My thanks are finally due to Shri Biram Mukherjee whose expertise I have largely drawn upon in planning and executing the lay-out and design of the get-up and for seeing



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*Calcutta, 10 June, 1980*

N. R. RAY



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## 1 • Assam





## ***Ancient Period***

# AN ICONOGRAPHICAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT ASSAM

DR. KALYAN KUMAR DASGUPTA  
(*University of Calcutta*)

## I

DIVINE IMAGES of a given time and space are reliable records of human ideas underlying them. While they spell out the ethos of a people of that time and space, a depth study of them in the context of earlier and later icons discovered in cognate culture-zones affords us a glimpse into the process resulting in the creation of the said ethos. This is markedly true of Assam where such images are by no means rare and where the fusion of a number of racial and linguistic strains has given its people a distinctive character. Unfortunately, however, images of Hindu divinities (Buddhist icons are comparatively few) hailing from different parts of Assam, which constitute a significant source of the history of the State, have not been exhaustively and critically studied.

## II

Cult-images of the Hindu pantheon pertaining to the repertoire of Assam may be broadly divided into two groups : the first group comprising representations of divinities speaks of a common denominator. In other words, they are an extension of the icono-plastic dictions of Northern India during the Gupta and the Pala-Sena periods.

Of the several illustrative specimens mention may be made of the exquisite reliefs of the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, recovered from the ruins of the fifth century Siva temple at Dah Parvatia (Darrang district). At the bottom of the jambs of the well-carved door frame of the said temple the twin goddesses have been shown with halo round their head and on their respective mounts, *makara* and *kurma* (now much damaged), each of them holding a pearl-necklace.

The sensitive and graceful modelling of the figures speaks of the Gupta idiom and they are reminiscent of their life-size terracotta counterparts found at Ahichchhatra in U.P. Incidentally, the representations of Ganga and Yamuna supply the earliest evidence of icono-plastic art in Assam worthy of consideration. An image of Surya, showing him seated in a cross-legged fashion has been recovered from the same site. Contemporaneous with the figures of Ganga and Yamuna this image also belongs to the Gupta tradition. To these examples may be added the neatly modelled representation of Hara-Gauri found among the ruins of a sixth century shrine on the Bara-Ganga in the Nowgong district. And like the previous ones, this also attests to the easternmost extension of the Gupta style and in respect of iconographic features like the ithyphallic trait of Siva, the third eye on the foreheads of both Siva and Parvati, the attributes, the sitting postures, etc., this is comparable to Hara-Gauri images of other parts of Northern India. Thus all these specimens bear evidence to the fact that the artists of Assam followed the iconographic prescriptions current in Northern India and depicted the deities in contemporary Gupta style.

A common denominator is also met with in the icono-plastic art of later days. Stone images of Vishnu and Surya hailing respectively from Barpeta (Kamarup district) and Davaka (Nowgong district) may be cited as illustrations on this point. Assignable to the eleventh-twelfth century, both these examples are the product of the Pala school of sculpture of Bengal and Bihar and attest to the extension of the Pala art style in Assam. Iconographically, they closely follow the prescriptions current in Bengal, Bihar and elsewhere.

In the sculpture of Vishnu, the god carries his usual attri-

butes, viz., *padma*, *gada*, *chakra* and *sankha* and is flanked by his attendants, Lakshmi and Sarasvati. Likewise in the other piece Surya has been shown as carrying full-blown lotuses held in his hands, and as riding on a chariot drawn by seven horses in the company of his consorts and other attendants like Usha, Pratyusha, Dandi and Pingala. Of a slightly later date are the beautiful sculptures of dancing Ganesa and Brahma of Holeswar near Tezpur and an effigy of Sun similar to previous one (i.e., the Davaka specimen), found at Gohpur (Darrang district).

The discovery of divine images of common icono-plastic tradition at Dah Parvatiya or Barpeta in Assam is but a natural phenomenon in view of the political and cultural relationship between Assam on the one hand and Bengal, Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh on the other. The imperial Guptas and the Pala and Sena monarchs of Madhyadesa brought Assam within the ambit of their political and cultural influence.

### III

Yet Assam had an icono-plastic diction of her own. And it appears to have come of its own in the eighth-ninth century, when regional schools started developing different parts of India. One of the earliest images illustrating this idiom is a representation of Vishnu discovered at Deopani (Sibsagar). Assignable to the later eighth or the early ninth century, the example portrays the god with his usual features in regard to attributes, *vanamala* and the *kirita* crown, yet it clearly spells out a non-Aryan Mongoloid influence 'in the expression of the face and the treatment of lower lip'.

The phenomenon may be explained by the fact that the findspot lies closer to Dimapur and Kasomari "where still exist the ruins of the peculiar culture associated with the Kacharis".\* To this may be added the bronze figure of Indra from Odalbakra (Gauhati) showing him seated astride on his elephant-mount, Airavata, with his characteristic emblem of thunderbolt in one of

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\* *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Reports*, 1923-24, pp. 80-81.

his hands and the horizontal third eye on his forehead. Not *far removed* in point of time from the Deopani image of Vishnu this specimen also exhibits non-Aryan influence and aesthetically though both of them lack the refined modelling of the Pala sculptures, they have a character of their own. The artists of Assam were thus bold enough in giving expression to their own creative impulse and aesthetic experience in such cult-icons, but they were still hesitant in making any deviation from the iconographical norm followed in other parts of India, particularly in Madhyadesa, the land *par excellence* of the Brahmanical culture. This hesitation was also to disappear shortly with the advent of the Ahoms on the political scene in the early thirteenth century.

The Ahoms embraced Hinduism and accepted Hindu deities as objects of veneration, but strikingly enough they did not invariably follow the iconographical canons in respect of the depiction of these deities. Perhaps the persons with political and economic power can overcome the current religious injunctions and in this regard the Ahoms remind us of an eminent Indianized monarch Kanishka the Great of the Kushan dynasty who was bold enough to portray the Buddha in Kumar form on his coins in contravention to the contemporary religious injunction forbidding such a depiction.

Among the Hindu icons of the Ahom repertoire showing iconographical deviations mention may be made of the icons in some of the temples at Sibsagar, the well-known seat of power of the Ahom kings and its environs. The eighteenth century relief of Surya on the wall of the Jagaddhattri dot at Sibsagar while portrays the god as riding on a chariot drawn by seven horses in the usual manner, it exotically endows him with a bow and an arrow in his hands in place of his age-old full blown lotus emblems. The brass statue of Mahishasuramardini, from Tinsukia (Dibrugarh) of about the eighteenth century, shows the goddess, with conventional ten hands (weapons are now gone, riding on her lion-mount and killing the buffalo-demon with her trident), to this extent it conforms to the iconographical norms, but the artist responsible for it makes a marked departure in showing Mahisasura in full human form, and by placing the decapitated head of the buffalo near his right leg, he makes an intelligent

suggestion regarding his association with the said animal. More unconventional than this piece is the image of Durga, known as Budhi Gosani, from Mangaldoi; despite her conventional ten hands it is different from the traditional Mahishamardini figure in respect of aesthetic taste and outlook, iconographical diction, and above all, the psychological climate which it breathes.

It may be concluded without multiplying instances that in the Ahom age Assam developed an icono-plastic language of her own, which distinguishes her cult-icons from those of other parts of India on the one hand and even those of her own of the pre-Ahom period with inspiration from contemporary idioms on the other.

Another noteworthy characteristic feature of iconography in Assam is the absence of Saptamatrika group which is of common occurrence in other parts of India, particularly in not too-far neighbouring States of Bihar and Orissa. Quantitatively, Saptamatrika panels are few in Bengal and to my knowledge they are unknown in early Assam. Separate representations of some of these Matrikas, such as Chamunda, so far found in Assam are but few, the well-known illustrative specimens being of Hojai (Nowgong district) and the Kamakhya hill.

A few independent Matrika sculptures may be encountered on the walls of some Ahom monuments at Gaurisagar and Jaisagar, for instance, but none of these specimens is datable prior to the eighteenth century. Distinctiveness of iconography in Assam is also articulate in certain new iconic types as best exemplified by an image of Indra with a canopy of serpent hoods over the head of the deity. I have not yet been able to trace any textual prescription answering to this interesting statue, it is admittedly a valuable and unique piece from iconographic point of view.

#### IV

Finally, some of the divine effigies, particularly of the first group datable to the pre-Ahom period, bear a significant kinship with a few distinctive iconic types current in Bengal as well as in



Orissa in the early mediaeval period. Of them Nataraja-on-bull and Ganesa-on-rat offer revealing examples. Quite a good number of images depicting Siva-Nataraja dancing on the back of his mount, Nandi, have been discovered in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) and the type came into existence in the early tenth century. From Bengal it travelled to Assam, Tripura (former Hill Tipperah) and Orissa and in Assam, the type is well represented by two specimens, both hailing from Gauhati proper ; chronologically, they are later than the Bengal specimens and are contemporaneous with Orissan examples.

The other iconic type, apparently inspired by the previous one, portrays Ganesa as dancing on the back of his tiny vehicle, the rat. This was also a product of the Bengal atelier and a fine specimen, recovered from North Bengal, is now an exhibit in the Indian Museum ; it belongs to the twelfth century. A parallel example in Assam has been encountered in a gate-wall of the Kamakhya temple ; in this fourteenth century relief the four-handed god is dancing on his mount. None of these types has been traced in Bihar as yet, and the second one is absent in Orissa, of a few other characteristic iconic types the Sapta-matrika group and Matsya-varahi appear to have come from Bihar and Orissa to Bengal, where they earned popularity in course of time.

In any case, the icono-plastic materials currently at our disposal are adequate enough to maintain the theory, postulated some time ago by me elsewhere, that an Eastern Indian School of Brahmanical Iconography existed in the early mediaeval period. And as regards the Hindu icons of Assam of the Ahom epoch of her history in particular, admittedly they are valuable records from the standpoint of social anthropology in so far as they have clearly shown that the process of Sanskritization (to borrow the term from M. N. Srinivas) of the ritual and pantheon of the aliens and the low-caste Hindus is but one side of the medal, the other side has hitherto been rarely looked at and seriously ever discussed.

Assam, which has deservedly been studied by ethnologists should also claim the attention of historians and social anthropologists on account of its valuable culture-relics. Indeed, the study



of Hindu icons of Assam in depth, if carried out in the context of images, discovered in other parts of India, will enable us to assess Assam's contributions to the mainstream of Indian culture in general and to our age-old icono-plastic *koine* in particular.

# ANCIENT SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF ASSAM

DR. N. N. BHATTACHARYYA

(University of Calcutta)

## I

THE NAME ASSAM is derived from that of a tribe, the Ahoms, who conquered eastern Assam in A.D. 1228. In ancient times the state was known as Pragjyotisha or Kamarupa. The earliest reference to the former is found in the *Mahabharata* and to the latter in the works of Kalidasa and the Allahabad Prasasti of Samudragupta. In a few royal epigraphs the country is called Saumara or Saumara-Kamarupa. In later writings the state is known as Assam or Acam.

The *Kalikapurana* and *Yoginitantra* give a detailed account of the geographical limits of Pragjyotisha or Kamarupa. Assam is situated roughly between lat.  $23^{\circ}41'$  and  $28^{\circ}16'N$  and long.  $90^{\circ}$  and  $97^{\circ}12'E$ . The British province of Assam, which is now divided into a number of states, fell into three natural divisions : the Valley of the Surma, the Valley of the Brahmaputra and the intervening range of hills which, projecting at right angles from the Burmese systems, run like a wedge from east to west.

Earlier writers on Assam, although they were quite aware of the racial, linguistic, social, religious, political and customary diversities constituting the country, preferred to study the region as a whole, because they could not ignore the basic fact that to a great extent the diverse cultural complexes coincided with each other in certain phases of their development eventually leading to something characteristic of the history of the entire territory itself.

European interest in the history of Assam and its rich and

heterogeneous cultural tradition was roused after the expedition of Captain Welsh in this part of India in 1793. F. B. Hamilton's *An Account of Assam* is probably the earliest extant work containing glimpses of Assamese life which was published as early as in 1808. This was followed by a good number of reports meant for shaping East India Company's political policy in regard to this region which contained in addition much information on the social, economic, religious and political life of different communities. R. B. Pamberton's *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India* which was published in 1835 is one of the earliest of such works.

Anthropological and sociological studies on Assam were facilitated with the publication of the *Topography of Assam* by J. M'Cosh in 1837 and the third volume of *Eastern India* by M. Martin in 1838. In 1841, W. Robinson published *A Descriptive Account of Assam* which was followed by M. F. Jenkin's *Selection of Papers regarding the Hill Tracts between Assam and Burma on the Upper Brahmaputra* in 1842. In 1844, H. Yule published his notes on the Khasi Hills and Peoples which served as the basis of subsequent anthropological researches. It was followed by the publication of Major J. Butler's *A Sketch of Assam* in 1847 and *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* in 1855. J. D. Hooker's *Himalayan Journal* published in 1854 contained many useful information. W. McCulloch's *Account of Munnipore and of the Hill Tribes* was the first specialised work of anthropological character which came out in 1859.

Captain J. Butler's *Administrative Report of the Naga Hills* was published in 1870-71. It was followed by E. T. Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (1872) which contained all possible information in relation to settlement, physical characters, social and linguistic affinities, family and kinship, social organisation, polity and other facts of life of the peoples of eastern India including those of Assam. In 1873 were published two works—R. Brown's *Statistical Account of the Native State of Manipur* and T. T. Cooper's *The Mishmee Hills*.

With the publication of W. W. Hunter's *Statistical Account of Assam* in two volumes in 1879, studies on Assam underwent

a qualitative change. Tribal studies found a new dimension in Mackenzie's *Tribes of the N. E. Frontier of Bengal* (1884), J. Owen's *Notes on the Naga Tribes in Communication with Assam* (1884) and C. A. Soppit's accounts of Kuki-Lushai tribes (1884), Kacha Naga tribes (1885) and Kachari tribes (1886).

The 1891 *Census Report* of Assam was published by E. A. Gait in 1892. In 1896 was published J. Johnston's memoirs on Manipur and Naga Hills, and in the same year came out the first religious history of Assam written by Manmatha Nath Ghosh under the title *A Brief Sketch of the Religious Beliefs of the Assamese People*. A team was engaged in the last decade of the nineteenth century for collecting materials dealing with the history of Assam, and the report of its investigations was published by Gait in 1897 under the title *Report on the Progress of Historical Researches in Assam*.

The 1901 *Census Report* of Assam was published by B. C. Allen in 1902 which was followed by the publication of the District Gazetteers—Vol. III Goalpara (1906), Vol. IV Kamrup (1905), Vol. V. Darrang (1905), Vol. VI Nowgong (1906), Vol. VII Sibsagar (1906) and Vol. VIII Lakhimpur (1905). The importance of these publications was undoubtedly manifold.

In 1903, P. R. T. Gurdon published *Some Assamese Proverbs* which was followed by his celebrated work *The Khasis* published in 1907. Among other tribal studies mention should be made of E. Stack and C. Lyall's *The Mikirs* (1908), A. Playfair's *The Garos* (1909), T. C. Hodson's *The Meithies of Manipur* (1908) and *The Naga Tribes of Manipur* (1912), E. W. Clark's *Ao Naga Dictionary* (1911), S. Endle's *The Kacharis* (1911), A. Hamilton's *The Abor Jungles* (1912), J. Shakespear's *The Lusai Kuki Clans* (1912), L. W. Shakespear's *History of Upper Assam* (1914) and B. Rajkhowa's *A Short Account of Assam* (1915). Subsequent important anthropological publications were J. H. Hutton's *The Sema Nagas* (1921) and *The Angami Nagas* (1921), W. C. Smith's *The Ao Naga Tribes of Assam* (1925), J. P. Mills' *The Lhota Nagas* (1922), *The Ao Nagas* (1926), *The Rengma Nagas* (1937) and C. V. F. Haimendorf's *The*

*Naked Nagas* (1939). These were followed by a host of publications in specialised fields of tribal studies.

Needless to say that the works mentioned above have provided solid basis of modern anthropological studies in relation to Assam. This line of study is important for certain reasons. Owing to the paucity of literary and epigraphical materials, especially so far as the ancient history of Assam is concerned, the study of the past should especially be dependent on a close and critical examination of the present conditions. Thanks to the tribal character of Assamese population, by which of course greater Assam is meant, the old customs, institutions and traditions are surviving even today with greater vigour than they are doing among peoples belonging to other parts of the country. A historical study of these survivals belongs to the domain of the Anthropologists, and it is gratifying to note that some work has been really done in this field. But with the decline of the Evolutionist method of anthropological research and with the emergence of the Functional and other schools, the study of the survivals as a means of reconstructing ancient history has been abandoned now-a-days. For the historians it is really a matter of regret.

The other source, and evidently the basic source is archaeology. It is archaeological explorations and excavations that help us to locate the original sites of early settlements and to understand the development of distinctive cultures from a direct and first-hand knowledge of what men did in the past. Unfortunately archaeological researches in Assam are even today below the level of infancy. Some of the anthropological works mentioned above contain archaeological materials no doubt, but these do not add much to our knowledge. The Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, contain a few neolithic specimens collected aimlessly from different parts of the land.

In the seventies of the nineteenth century J. D. Anderson, J. Lubbock, H. B. Medlicott and E. H. Steel came across numerous neoliths in the Khasi-Jaintia hills area which were subsequently found in Darrang, Cachar, the Naga hills, the Garo hills,



the Lusai or Mizo hills, Manipur and Upper Assam. Specialised studies in this respect were made previously by C. Brown (1917ff) and J. Hutton (1921ff).

Excavations at Deojali Hading in North Cachar district have yielded tangible result in Neolithic studies. The finds represent a transition from Mesolithic to Neolithic. Recently, i.e., in the sixties of the present century, T. C. Sharma has discovered traces of lower Palaeolithic cultures from the Garo hills. Attention to the wealth of Megaliths of Assam was drawn by J. P. Mills. Hutton, Calvert, Godwin Austen, Haimendorf and others worked on this subject, and their insistence was solely on the migration of the Megalithic culture. It has also been a common practice to associate the Assam Megaliths with those of South-East Asia and the Pacific islands, but these are found all over in tribal India erected in honour of the dead.

The result of the researches on Assam archaeology during the last hundred years has been given by A. H. Dani in his work on prehistory and protohistory of Eastern India (1960). Subsequently H. D. Sankalia in his informative volume *Prehistory and Protohistory* has described the archaeological sites of Assam along with the nature of finds yielded therefrom. Dani himself made an attempt to give a survey of the Neolithic cultures of Assam by dividing the country into seven archaeological zones on the basis of the implements collected so far, but it is quite inadequate. During the last twenty years some amount of archaeological work has been done by different government sponsored institutions and universities, but this is not sufficient even for providing a bare outline of the development of the early settlements, their transformation from one state to another, mutual relations, chronological stratification and so forth.

One of the most striking characteristics of the early history of Assam is the influx of the outsiders, the immigrating tribes from different regions. The remains of their material culture are still unexplored and we are still in dark in regard to the real influence of the exotic cultures upon the land and its peoples. Unless we have a complete archaeological picture in relation to the prehistory, protohistory and early history of Assam, nothing can be done positively in relation to the ancient history of Assam.

## II

The literary sources are not also very much encouraging. As early as in 1855 A. R. Dhekial Phukan published *A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language*. In 1894 G. F. Nicholl published *A Manual of Bengali Language including the Assamese Grammar*.

Linguistic studies in relation to Assam found a new dimension with the publication of the first five volumes of G. A. Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* between 1903 and 1909. The Assamese vocabulary is mainly, if not exclusively, derived from Sanskrit. There are also some non-Sanskritic elements, limited both in extent and in degree, coming from the Austro-Asiatic (Khasi of the Mon-Khmer family), Tibeto-Burman (Bodo) and Thai (Ahom). The language the Ahoms brought was known as Shan. In undifferentiated Assam we have the following linguistic groups: Bodo represented by the Garos; the Dimasa or Kachari and various small groups like the Chutiya, Rabha, Mech and Koch; Naga which is closely related to Bodo, having a number of dialects; Kuki-Chin, the most important of which is Manipuri or Meithi; Mikir, spoken in the region to the south of the Brahmaputra between the Khasi and Naga hills; and North Assam group spoken by small tribes in the Himalayan slopes north of the Brahmaputra, like Abor, Miri, Aka, Dafla and Mishmi. These linguistic groups have been characterised by S. K. Chatterji as belonging to the *Kirata* category. According to him these Kirata-speaking peoples did possess a mass of oral literature, as an expression of their cultural and socio-religious life, a considerable portion of which have been interwoven with the threads of the Sanskrit mythological and literary tradition.

The historical literature of Assam is known as Buranji, but these works belong to the medieval, late-medieval and modern periods. Not all the Buranjis have yet been brought to light. For the ancient period we are yet to remain satisfied with the Sanskrit works which, however, do not serve a very useful purpose. The *Aitareya Brahmana* (I. 3.7) and the *Sankhyayana Grihyasutra* (II. 38) make shadowy reference to Kamarupa, while Lauhitya, i.e., the Brahmaputra, is mentioned in Kautilya's

*Arthasastra* (II. 11) in connection with mineral products. References to the city and country of Pragjyotisha and to Naraka and his family, along with the Kiratas, Cinas and other tribes are found in the *Mahabharata* (II. 26-30; V. 18; VII. 26-30, VIII. 5, etc.). It mentions Kamakhya, and Bhagadatta along with his exploits. The *Ramayana* (I. 35; IV. 42; etc.) records the foundation of the city of Pragjyotisha by Amurtaraja, and Naraka's establishment on the Varaha mountain. The tradition of Naraka and his son Bhagadatta, to which the historical kings of Kamarupa used to trace their descent, is found in the Puranas (cf. *Visnu* I, IV, V, XXIX; *Brahma* CXIV. 15; *Vayu* XLV; etc.). The *Markandeya Purana* (LVII-LVIII) and the *Garuda Purana* (LXXXIX) give geographical description of Kamarupa. The most important Puranic source is, however, the *Kalika Purana* which was composed in Assam about the tenth century A.D.

Kamarupa or Pragjyotisha is mentioned in Varahamihira's *Brihatsamhita* (XIV. 6; XVI. 1), Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsa*, Dandin's *Dasakumaracarita* and Purusottama's *Trikandasesa*. The first historical king of Kamarupa for whom we have any reliable documentary evidence was Bhaskaravarman, a contemporary of Harsha. It is in the *Harshacarita* of Banabhatta and in the *Si-yu-ki* of Hiuen Tsang that we come across some details of Kamarupa during the reign of this king. There are a few Chinese texts which refer to Bhaskara as a patron of esoteric sciences. It was under his patronage that a Sanskrit translation of *Tao-te-king*, the celebrated Taoist text, was made. An account of this work exists in the *Chi-Ku-Chin-Fo-Tao-Lun-Heng* (Critical Collection of Discourses on Buddhist Doctrines in Various Ages). Facts on Kamarupa are found also in such Chinese works as the *Shung Shu*, the *T'ang Shu* and the records of I-Tsing and Wang-Hiuen-Tse. Tibetan sources like Pag-Sam-Zon-Zan, Bu-ston's and Taranatha's *Historics*, etc., contain references to Kamarupa.

The *Mudrarakshasa* of Visakhadatta contains an important reference to Avantivarma. In Rajasekhara's *Kavyamimamsa* (XVII) Kamarupa is placed among the countries of the east while in his *Karpuramanjari* Kamarupa is described along with Champa, Karnasuvarna, Radha and Harikela. In lexical works like Yadava-

prakasa's *Vaijayanti*, and Hemachandra's *Abhidhanacintamani*, Kamarupa is identified with Pragjyotisha. In Yasodhara's *Jayamangala*, commentary on the *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana, Kamarupa is located among countries of the east. Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* (II. 147-48; III. 9-10; IV. 171) mentions Amritaprabha, daughter of the Kamarupa ruler married to Meghavahana of Kashmir, and Lalitaditya's campaign as far as the Lauhitya. Bilhana's *Vikramankadevacarita* (III. 74) refers to an invasion of Kamarupa. Sandhyakaranandin's *Ramacarita* (III. 47) refers to the conquest of Kamarupa by Ramapala's general, Mayana. The Tantric Buddhist text *Manjusrimulakalpa* contains important historical materials in relation to Kamarupa. The *Hevajratantra* mentions Kamarupa as one of the four major *Pithas* of India. Details of Kamarupa are found in the *Kamakhyā* and *Yogini* Tantras, while other Tantric texts like the *Saktisāṅgama*, *Kulārṇava*, *Sammohana*, *Dakārṇava*, *Kaulājñānamīrnaya*, etc., contain occasional references.

But it is to be admitted that in spite of numerous textual references to Assam, the literary sources are hopelessly unable to present even a bare outline of the early history of Assam. Epigraphical materials have not also been found in plenty. Most of the inscriptions bearing on the dynastic history of the Kings of the Brahmaputra Valley are recorded in P. N. Bhattacharyya's *Kamarupāsanaśālā* which was published in 1939. Subsequent discoveries of epigraphs are only a few. Recently Professor Mukunda Madhava Sharma has brought out a nice edition of the earlier epigraphical records of Assam. Among these epigraphs reference should be made to the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta (*CII*, III, pp. 1ff) mentioning the frontier kings of Kamarupa during the fourth century A.D., the Mandasore inscription of Yasodharman (*CII*, III, pp. 142ff) mentioning Yasodharman's invasion up to the neighbourhood of Lauhitya; the Apsad inscription of Adityasena (*CII*, III, pp. 200ff) mentioning the conflict between Mahasenagupta and Susmhitavarman; the Tippiā grant of Lokanatha (*EI*, XV, pp. 301-312); the Pasupati inscription of the Nepalese King Jayadeva II (*IA*, IX, pp. 178ff); the Samangarh inscription of the Rashtrakuta King Dantidurga (*IA*, 1882, p. 114); the Bhagalpur grant of



Narayanapala (*IA*, XV, pp. 304ff) mentioning diplomatic relations ; the grant of the Ganga King Anantavarman (*EI*, XXVI, pp. 62-68) ; that of the Paramara King Vakpati (*EI*, XXIII, p. 109) ; the Belava grant of Bhojavarman (*EI*, XII, pp. 37-44) mentioning a conflict between Jatavarman and a Kamarupa ruler ; the Deopara inscription of Vijayasena (*EI*, I, p. 305) demanding submission of Kamarupa ; and the Madhainagar grant of Lakshmanasena (*JASB*, 1909, pp. 467ff) demanding the same.

Local epigraphs are, however, more important, which include the Badaganga inscription of Bhutivarman (*JRAS*, VIII, pp. 138-39 ; *IHQ*, XXI, pp. 143ff) ; the Nalanda Clay Seals (*ASIAR*, 1917-18, p. 45 ; *JBORS*, V, pp. 302-303 ; VI, pp. 151-52 ; *JRAS*, IV, pp. 89ff), the Nidhanpur grant (*EI*, XII, pp. 65ff ; XIX, pp. 118f, 245-50) and the Dhobi grant (*JRAS*, XI, pp. 33-38 ; XII, pp. 16-33 ; *IHQ*, XXVI, pp. 241-46) of Bhaskaravarman ; the Tezpur Rock inscription (*ASIAR*, 1902-03, p. 229 ; *JBORS*, 1917, pp. 508-14 ; *KS*, pp. 185-92) and Haiyungthal grant (*JRAS*, I, pp. 109ff ; *KS*, pp. 44-53) of Harjjaravarman ; the Tezpur grants (*JASB*, IX, pp. 766ff ; *KS*, pp. 54-70) and Parbatiya plates of Vanamala (*EI*, XXIX, pp. 145-59) ; the Nowgong grant (*JASB*, LXVI, pp. 285-97 ; *KS*, pp. 71-88) and Uttarbarbil plates (*ASSP*, XV, pp. 187-94) of Balavarman III ; the Bargaon (*JASB*, LXVII, pp. 99ff ; *KS*, pp. 88-109) and Suaikuchi grants of Ratnapala (*JASB*, LXVII, pp. 120-25) ; *KS*, pp. 110-15 ; the Guakuchi (*KS*, pp. 130-45) and Gauhati (*JASB*, LXVI, pp. 113-2 ; *KS*, pp. 116-29) of Indrapala ; the Khonamukhi (*JAHS*, VII, pp. 113-26) ; Subhankarapataka (*KS*, pp. 146-67) and Pushpabhadra (*KS*, pp. 168-84) grants of Dharmapala ; the Silimpur grant of Prahasa (*EI*, XIII, pp. 289-95) ; the Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva (*EI*, II, pp. 347-58) ; the Assam plates of Vallabhadra (*EI*, V, pp. 181-88) ; the Gachtal inscription in Nowgong (*IHQ*, XXII, pp. 12-14) ; etc.

A complete and comprehensive history of ancient Assam requires further exploration in different branches of historical materials. The existing materials, literary and epigraphic, which are by themselves too fragmentary to produce any concrete result should also at the same time be studied in the light of what is

known of the surviving tribal systems and archaeological explorations, as has already been indicated above.

### ABBREVIATIONS

ASIAR	—	<i>Archaeological Survey of India : Annual Report</i>
ASSP	—	<i>Asom Sahitya Sabha Patrika</i>
CII	—	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum</i>
EI	—	<i>Epigraphia Indica</i>
IA	—	<i>Indian Antiquary</i>
IHQ	—	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly</i>
JAHS	—	<i>Journal of Assam Historical Society</i>
JASB	—	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal</i>
JRAS	—	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
KS	—	<i>Kamarupasasanavali</i>

# STUDIES IN THE SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF ASSAM (ANCIENT PERIOD)

DR. N. N. ACHARYYA  
(*Gauhati University*)

## I

ARCHAEOLOGICAL researches show that the earliest sources for the history of Assam are the caves, stone-celts, pottery and megaliths. These are helpful for the study of the pre-Aryan and non-Aryan culture of Assam. For the historical period there are local epigraphs and fragmentary literary sources. The genealogies available in the epigraphs are very useful. The monuments of the historical period consist of remains of architecture, sculpture and images. Assam was known to the classical world for its rare quality of silk products and malabothram. Assam formed the eastern gateway for the passage of peoples, commodities and ideas between China and India. As such the foreign accounts supply useful information, throwing light on the contemporary events.

The available source materials may be divided into : 1. Indigenous Literature ; 2. Foreign Accounts ; and 3. Archaeological Evidence.

## II

### INDIGENOUS LITERATURE

Literary works came into existence in the eastern portion of India specially in the kingdom of Kamarupa (which is one

of the ancient names of Assam) only with the Aryan penetration. Prior to their advent the civilization of Assam was confined to the stone implements.

For knowing the actual position of civilization of ancient Assam after the Aryan advent one will have to take help of both the Vedic and later Vedic literatures. Out of various works of this category mention may be made of the following :

The *Satapatha Brahmana* records the progress of the Aryans up to Sadanira (identified with the river Karatoya) which the scholars regarded as the western boundary of the Pragjyotisa kingdom (another name of ancient Assam).<sup>1</sup> This source makes us believe that the Aryan culture entered into Assam before the Buddhistic period. The *Aitareya Brahmana* makes further indication of the spread of Aryan culture into Kamarupa before the Buddhists. We find a record of an early contact of the non-Aryan and Aryan elements in ancient Assam in the *Gopatha Brahmana*. The same literature gives us information about a tradition of the origin of the name of Kamarupa.<sup>2</sup>

The Grihya and Dharma Sutras are useful sources for studying the socio-economic and political life of the people of India in general and north-eastern part of it in particular.<sup>3</sup> The works of *Panini* and *Patanjali* bear similar importance. The *Sankhyayana Grihyasamgraha* records Pragjyotisa as the land of Sunrise (Chap. II, Banaras Sanskrit Series) which has been confirmed in the *Markandeya Purana* (58, 109). The *Brihatsamhita* of Varahamihira based on the Parasara Tantra<sup>4</sup> of the beginning of the Christian era bears further confirmation of the land of Sunrise.<sup>5</sup>

The *Arthasastra* of Kautilya which is an authentic source of the socio-economic history of India, makes important references to many places of Kamarupa, such as Suvarnakundya, Para-Lauhitya, etc., in connection with the economic products of ancient Kamarupa.<sup>6</sup> The great epics which give us an illuminating picture of the socio-political life of the people of India in general bear many important source materials for the history of ancient Assam. The Adikanda of the *Ramayana* (Chapt. XXXV) records the foundation of the city of Pragjyotisa in the Varaha mountain by Amurtaraja and the *Kiskindhyakanda* (Chapt. XIII) refers

to the Naraka's city of Pragjyotisa on the gold-crested Varaha mountain which was 64 yojanas in extent and stood on the fathomless Varunalaya (sea).

The references of the *Ramayana* gives us an indication towards the geographical location and economic wealth of the kingdom of Pragjyotisa.

The Sabha (XXVI-XXX), Asvamedha (XXV-XXVI), Udyoga (XVIII), Drona (XXVI-XXX), Bhishma and Karna (V) parvans of the *Mahabharata* bear many references to the Pragjyotisa kingdom together with the reference to Bhagadatta, a descendant of the family of Naraka along with the Kiratas, Chinas and other people which help us in studying the general socio-economic condition of the kingdom during the time of the Epic.

The *Brihatsamhita* of Varahamihira, which is a work of the fifth century A.D.<sup>7</sup> refers to both Pragjyotisa and the Lauhitya along with Magadha, China and Kambhoja.<sup>8</sup>

The works of many scholars like Kamandaka, Yajnavalkya and Manu bear useful referencs and source materials for the study of the political and social conditions of India and as such they are helpful for searching out the contemporary socio-economic condition of Assam.

Kalidasa, the greatest poet of India of the fifth century A.D., has mentioned the name of Kamarupa in his famous drama *Raghuvamsa*.<sup>9</sup> In describing the account of Raghu's Digvijaya (vide *Raghuvamsa*, IV, 81-84) Kalidasa has made reference to both Pragjyotisa and Kamarupa lying to the east of the Brahmaputra. This is no doubt an indication to the geographical feature of the land of ancient Assam.

The *Harsacharita* of Banabhatta of the early part of the seventh century A.D. contains many useful references to both the political and cultural condition of Kamarupa during the reign of the immortal king Bhaskaravarman.

Kamarupa finds mention in the writings of the most of the writers of India from the ninth to twelfth century A.D. Out of these works mention can be made of the following :

Vakpati's *Gaudavaho*, a work of the eighth century A.D. and the *Manjusrimulakalpa*, a Buddhist work of the contemporary



period bear important references to the history of Kamarupa.

Rajasekhara, who flourished during the ninth century A.D. mentioned Kamarupa as a mountain and Pragjyotisa as a country of the east in the seventeenth chapter of his *Kavyamimamsa*. He has also referred to both Karnasuvarna and Kamarupa with Radha, Champa and Harikela in his *Karpuramanjari*.<sup>10</sup>

References to Avantivarman who was a Kamarupa king has been made in the *Mudraraksasa* of Vishakhadatta.

In the *Abhidhanachintamani* of Ksemendra, who flourished between 1020 and 1040<sup>11</sup> the names of Banapura (the modern town of Tezpur)<sup>12</sup> have been mentioned as Devikota, Usavana, Kotivarsa and Sonitpura. This has been confirmed by the Visnu Purana and the Santi Parvan of the *Mahabharata*. The modern town Tezpur is still known as Sonitpur and is very popularly used in modern literature.

Somadeva in his famous work *Kathasaritsagara* has made a reference to 'Udayadri' which was the abode of the Siddhas situated to the east of Pundra. R. C. Hazra located 'Udayachala' in Orissa but 'Udayadri' has been identified with 'Udayachala' which was an important centre of Sun-worship, according to the *Markandeya Purana* and was associated with Kamarupa.

Hemachandra (1088-1172) has made a reference to Pragjyotisa which he considered to be another name of Kamarupa in his *Abhidhanachintamani*.

The conquest of Kamarupa by Ramapala's general Mayana has been mentioned in Sandhyakaranandin's *Ramacharita*.

Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* which is a work of 1148-49 A.D. throws a flood of light on the history of Assam of that period. It refers to Meghavahana of Kashmira who married Amritaprabha, the daughter of Kamarupa king. There is a further reference in the same book that the campaign of Lalitaditya reached as far as Kamarupa.

The chronicles of Assam like *Haragauri-Sambada*, *Haragauri-Vivasa*, etc., contain valuable references of both cultural and political importance and they enable us to make a detailed study on the cultural conditions for ancient and medieval periods of Assam's history.

The Puranas which bear many references of ancient Assam

can be taken as a good source for studying its socio-economic history. The *Skanda Purana* refers to the Sakti faith in Kamarupa. The *Agni Purana* refers to Bana of Sonitpura (the modern Tezpur town) and the *Kalika Purana* which mainly deals with the worship of the mother goddess Kamakhya bears a good reference to the socio-cultural condition of early and medieval Assam.

The *Garuda Purana* and the *Brihaddharma Purana* refer to Kamarupa and Kamakhya as great centres of pilgrimage, the *Markandeya Purana* also refers to Pragjyotisa with Udayachala, Lauhitya and Kamarupa as countries of the east. Both the *Vishnu* and the *Vrahma Puranas* relate the story of Naraka of Kamarupa.

The Tantrik Buddhist literature of India, Tibet and Nepal make important mention of Kamarupa, Kamakhya and other religious centres with the ancient geography of Assam. Of all these literary works, the *Yogini Tantra* gives us important information regarding cultural and economic condition of eastern India (especially Kamarupa) with the relative geographical conditions. The *Dikrakalpa*, a Tantrik work, deals with the worship of Tara and the geography of ancient Kamarupa. The *Saktisangama Tantra* also testifies to the prevalence of Sakti-worship in ancient Kamarupa.

*Pag-Som Zon-Zan*, *Grub Tob* and *Bka-Abab-Bdun-Idan*, all Tantrik works of Tibet, *Akulavira Tantra* and *Kamakhya-Guhya-Siddhi*, attributed to Minanatha, *Vyaktabhavanugatatattvasiddhi*, attributed to Sahajayogini Chinta, *Kularnava*, *Kamaratna Tantra*, attributed to Goraksanatha, and *Sadhanamala* contain valuable information about socio-religious conditions of ancient and medieval Assam.

### III

#### FOREIGN ACCOUNTS

The most important source for the study of the history of early Assam is the writings of the Chinese scholars. The land

had a cultural and commercial link with China even in those remote days when the civilization of the world was lying in the cradle. Thus we find in the evidence of *Chang Kien* (second century B.C.) a testimony of a commercial relation between China and Assam through Burma and other routes.<sup>13</sup> The accounts of the *Shung Shu* (420-79 A.D.) record the sending of two embassies from India to China of which one was sent by Yu Chai in 428 A.D. from the Kapili Valley.<sup>14</sup>

The authentic Chinese source which gives us the light of not only the history of Assam but of the whole country is the famous record of the immortal Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang who visited the Kingdom of Bhaskaravarman (Ka-mo-lu-pa) in 642 A.D. in which the pilgrim has given a descriptive geography of the state with its socio-economic, religious and political conditions.<sup>15</sup>

After Yuan Chwang two other Chinese missions visited India, in the records of which Bhaskaravarman's diplomatic and cultural relations with China have been referred to.<sup>16</sup>

Next to the Chinese records the other important sources for studying the socio-economic conditions of ancient Assam are the writings of the Greek and Roman scholars. The land was known to the classical writers from about the fifth century B.C. onwards by a different name and included in the kingdom of the Prasii and the Gangaridae. Herodotus mentions the Kalatioi along with Gandarioi and Pedaioi. Kakatioi or Kalatioi of Herodotus has been identified with the Kalitas of Assam who were one of the ancient settlers of Assam. Both Megasthenes and Strabo refer to the Derdai of the east who were noted for gold which has been identified with the Kalitas of Assam from the gold coin known to the Greeks as Kaltis. Pliny in his *Natural History* (vi) has made references to a number of people of the frontier and trans-Himalayan regions which bear indications to the Tibeto-Burman tribes of Northern Assam.

The next important classical sources are the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (first century A.D.). Ptolemy's *Geography* (second century A.D.), and geographical works of Pomponius Mela, Ammianus Marcellinus, Pausanias, Dionysius, Aelian,

Ctesias, and others.

The writings of some Muslim scholars can be regarded as useful sources for the study of early period of Assam's history. In Alberuni's *Kitabul Hind* we find geographical location of Kamarupa. Minhajuddin Siraj in his *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* (a work of thirteenth century A.D.) has thrown light on the conditions of Kamarupa during the invasion of Bakhtiyar (Saka Era 1127, A.D. 1205-6) and Ghiyasuddin (1226 A.D.), Nasiruddin in A.D. 1228 and Yuzbak in 1256-57 A.D.

## IV

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCES

The available Archaeological sources of Assam may be classified into four groups :

1. Rock Inscriptions
2. Copper Plates
3. The Clay Seals
4. Ancient Monuments

#### (I) *Rock Inscriptions*

1. The Rock cut inscription of Surendra Varman which reads as "Maharajadhiraj Sri Surendra Varmana Kritya Bhagavath-Balabhadrasvanine indanigriham" is described to be of the fifth century A.D. Surendra Varman has been identified with Mahendra Varman of the Varman dynasty which ruled from 450 to 485 A.D.

The inscription is incised in a few words on the Kamakhya Hill (*The Assam Tribune*, Gauhati, 26th June, 1955).

2. The Badaganga inscription of Bhuti Varman was issued in 553-54 A.D. It is incised in 3½ lines in a rock near Davaka in modern Nowgong district. Bhuti Varman was the eighth ruler of the Varman line and ruled from 510 to 555 A.D. (*Epigraphia Indica*, 1947, pp. 18-23 ; *Indian Historical Quarterly*, xxi, 143).

3. The Tezpur Rock inscription of Harjjaravarman (dated 829 A.D.) incised on a boulder containing nine lines. It was deciphered by Pandit Haraprasad Sastri and published in

the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* in December, 1917.

The same inscription was also referred to by Mr. Marshall in the *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India* (p. 229) in 1902 and Pandit Padma Nath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinod in his *Kamarupa Sasanavali* (pp. 185-92) Harjjaravarman belonged to the Salastambha dynasty and ruled from 815 to 835 A.D.

4. The Silimpur grant found inscribed on a stone slab in Silimpur mouza of Kothal thana of Bogra district of modern Bangladesh (Referred to by R. G. Basak in *Epigraphia Indica*, XIII, pp. 289-95) which records the "Tulapurusa" gift (a gift of 900 gold coins) to a Brahmin named Prahasa by the then Kamarupa King Jayapala in 1120 A.D. of Pala Dynasty of Kamarupa. Jayapala ruled from 1120 to 1138 A.D. This record is no doubt a helpful source of socio-economic potentiality of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa.

5. The Kanai Varai rock inscription of North Gauhati of the Saka Era 1127 equivalent to 1205-06 A.D. relates the story of defeat of Mahammad-i-Bakhtiyar in Kamarupa. Col. Gurdon made a reference to this inscription in 1918. Pandit Padma Nath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinod has also made a reference to the same in his *Kamarupa Sasanavali* (intro. p. 44).

6. The Allahabad Pillar Prasasti of Samudragupta mentions the frontier kings of Kamarupa and Davaka during the fourth century A.D. (Fleet, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, pp. 1f). It makes references to the geographical boundary of the kingdom of Kamarupa. This inscription refers to Pushyavarman whose regnal period was 355 to 380 A.D.

7. Nagajori Khani Kargaon Rock Inscription found in the above mentioned village in the Golaghat sub-division of the fifth century A.D. (Ref. *Adhyayana Parichaya*, ed. by Professor Nagen Saikia of Dibrugarh University, 1978).

## (II) Copper Plates

1. The Doobi grant of Bhasker Varman (594-650 A.D.) which consists of six plates of which the last one has been found broken bears some useful information about the socio-economic



conditions of Kamarupa kingdom during the reign of Bhaskara Varman. It was referred to by Professor D. C. Sircar in the *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXV, pp. 241-46.

2. The Nidhanpur Copper Plate inscription of Bhaskara Varman (*circa* 610 A.D.) discovered and deciphered by Pandit Padma Nath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinod in a village called Nidhanpur in the modern district of Sylhet (now in Bangladesh) and published in *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XII (p. 65) and XIX (pp. 118f) bears equivalent source materials as those of the other grants of the same king of Kamarupa. There existed seven plates of which one is missing.

3. The Haiyungthal Copper Plate inscription of Harjjara-varman (*circa* 825 A.D.) of the Salastambha line was discovered by Pandit Padma Nath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinod in Haiyungthal village of modern Nowgong district and published in *Kamarupa Sasanavali* (pp. 44-45).

The inscription had three copper plates of which only the middle one has been discovered by the Pandit.

4. The Tezpur Copper Plate inscription of Vanamala Varman (*circa* 854 A.D.) of the Salastambha line which was found in the modern town of Tezpur and deciphered by Pandit Kamalakanta and published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. IX, in 1840. Vanamala Varman ruled from 835 to 865 A.D.

5. The Nowgong Copper Plate inscription of Bala Varman III of the Salastambha line which consists of three plates found in Sutargaon village of Nowgong district which was deciphered by Dr. Hoernle who published it in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Part I, in 1897. Bala Varman III ruled from 885 to 910 A.D.

6. The Uttarbarbil (Howraghat, Mikir Hills) Copper Plate inscription of Bala Varman III which consists of three plates, was deciphered by Dr. P. C. Choudhury and published in the *Asom Sahitya Sabha Patrika*, 15th year, no. 3, pp. 187-94.

7. The Bargaon Copper Plate inscription of Ratnapala (*circa* 1025 A.D.) was deciphered by Dr. Hoernle and published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. I of 1898. Ratnapala ruled from 1010 to 1040 A.D.

8. The Suaikuchi Copper Plate inscription of Ratnapala (*circa* 1028 A.D.) which was deciphered by Dr. Hoernle and published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Part I of 1898. The inscription consisted of three plates of which one is missing.

9. The Gauhati Copper Plate inscription of Indrapala (*circa* 1038 A.D.) which was found in Barpanara in modern Darrang district was deciphered by Dr. Hoernle and published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Part I of 1897. The inscription consists of three plates. Indrapala ruled from 1040 to 1065 A.D.

10. The Guakuchi Copper Plate inscription of Indrapala (*circa* 1051 A.D.) found in a village named Guakuchi near Nalbari was deciphered by Pandit Padma Nath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinod and published in *Kamarupa Sasanavali* (pp. 168-84 and 130-45).

11. The Puspabhadra Copper Plate inscription of Dharmapala (*circa* 1110 A.D.) found in the north bank of the Brahmaputra near North Gauhati which was deciphered and published by Pandit Padma Nath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinod in his *Kamarupa Sasanavali* (pp. 168-84). Dharmapala ruled from 1095 to 1120 A.D.

12. The Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva (1138-45), which consists of three plates, was found in Banaras in 1892 A.D. and was deciphered by A. Venis and published in *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. II (pp. 347-58).

### (III) *Clay Seals*

The three Nalanda Clay Seals of Bhaskara Varman (*circa* 643 A.D.) which were deciphered by K. N. Dikshit and published in the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol. VI (pp. 151-52) are probably the only clay seals issued in ancient Assam so far discovered.

### (IV) *Ancient Monuments*

Ancient monuments of Assam also serve the purpose of archaeological sources. One of the earliest specimens, ascribed to the fifth century A.D. is found in the region of Dah Parvatia

in Tezpur. Mention may be made in this connection of the Kamakhya and Ambari ruins. The antiquities of Surya Pahar are also very significant (see R. D. Choudhury's paper in this volume, Ed.).

## REFERENCES

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- <sup>2</sup> *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, XIX, pp. i-ii.
- <sup>3</sup> R. K. Mukherjee, *Hindu Civilization*, pp. 120f.
- <sup>4</sup> H. Kern, *Introduction to Brihatsamhita*, p. 32.
- <sup>5</sup> H. C. Chakladar, *Studies in the Kamasutra*, p. 72.
- <sup>6</sup> *Arthasastra*, Book II, Chap. XI (Comm. by Bhattasvami)
- <sup>7</sup> H. Kern, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.
- <sup>8</sup> Chapters XIX and XIV, I of the *Brihatsamhita*.
- <sup>9</sup> M. Collins, *Geographical Data of the Raghuvamsa and Dasakumara-charita*, p. 48 (f. n.).
- <sup>10</sup> Ed. M. M. Ghosh, p. 5.
- <sup>11</sup> Weber, *History of Indian Literature*, p. 213.
- <sup>12</sup> D. R. Bhandarkar, *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, XII, p. 103.
- <sup>13</sup> P. C. Bagchi, *India and China*, pp. 7 and 16f.
- <sup>14</sup> G. E. Gerini in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London, 1910, pp. 1187-1201.
- <sup>15</sup> P. C. Bagchi, *op. cit.*, pp. 7f and 16f.
- <sup>16</sup> A. Cunningham, *Ancient Geography of India*, London, 1871, p. 478. Appendix A states that Yuan Chwang visited Kamarupa from 5th August to 30th September, 642 A.D.

# ANTIQUITIES OF SRI SURYA PAHAR : A SOURCE OF EARLY HISTORY OF KAMARUPA

DR. R. D. CHOUDHURY  
(Assam State Museum, Gauhati)

## I

SRI SURYA PAHAR, located at a distance of about 14 km. east from Goalpara town, can be reached by the Goalpara Dudhnoi-via-Mornoi road. The exact site of the antiquities is about a mile west of the Sainik School, Mornoi, on the slope of the Sri Surya Pahar (hill).

There is a modern tin-shed sanctuary and an ordinary Assam-type house of the Sri Surya Pahar Committee. Now-a-days in good weather any vehicle can reach this place. Towards a little north on the slope of the hill a row of rock-cut sculptures, a few rock-cut caverns and a few votive *stupas* are seen. The site is full of huge boulders under which a small spring flows. Reaching the site one first faces the row of rock-cut sculptures, which are badly weathered as the quality of rock is not good. There are as many as eight images, in *samapadaasthanaka* attitude. The first image of the row (from left to right) is a four-armed male figure representing Siva. The *jata* on the head of the deity is quite clearly visible. The upper hands hold a *sarpa* and a *trisula* while the lower ones appear to show *varadamudra*, and an *ayudha*, i.e., weapon. Below the god Nandi is shown in nude form. The next two-armed image represents Visnu holding *gada* and *cakra* and bedecked with a long *vanamala*. The third image represents four-handed Siva holding the same object as the other Siva image.

To the left of the third image there is a little blank space,

where traces of an almost erased image are noticed. This was an image of a Risi holding a *Kamandalu*. This figure may clearly be observed in the photograph published by P. D. Choudhury along with his article in 1960.<sup>1</sup> Towards further right are seen the other five rock-cut images. Among them the first three two-armed images represent Visnu. Each of them holds *gada* and *cakra* in the hands. The fourth image possibly represents Hari-Hara, holding in its upper right hand a *trisula*, and in the upper left a *cakra*. The lower right hand is in *varadamudra*, while the lower left holds an indistinct object. The god wears a *vanamala*. No *vahana* is shown. The last image of the row possibly represents Visnu. All the images have suffered badly from weathering effect, and hence the details of the sculptures have been fairly damaged.

To the right of this row of sculpture across the streamlet there are two rock-cut miniature caves, inside of one of which is seen (not very clearly) a small Sivalinga. The lower portion of one of these caves is under the sand. The Sivalinga, which is also partially under sand accumulation, possibly was placed later as the stone quality of the exposed *linga* differs from that of the caves.

Just above the rock which carries the row of icons described above three Sivalingas are seen. The *linga* portions of these objects however, are almost broken off. Above these broken Sivalingas is seen a twelve-armed *sthanaka* icon of some deity on a separate rock facing to the east. The deity wears a *kirita-mukuta*(?) and above the head is seen a seven-hooded snake canopying the deity. The *kativastra* worn by the deity almost reaches the ankles. A *vanamala* is also seen on the body of the deity. It is difficult to know about the precise identity of the icon. P. D. Choudhury who visited this site in 1960, identifies it with Manasa. From the photograph published by Choudhury<sup>2</sup> along with his paper, it becomes clear that the icon in question represents some female deity with raised breasts. But G. V. Bhuyan<sup>3</sup> is of the opinion that since Choudhury white-washed the icons of the site before taking the photograph, in order to bring the prominence of the sculptures, it is highly possible that there must have been some wrong. But in the photograph of the same



image published by R. M. Nath<sup>4</sup> in 1948, the female breasts can be traced. Nath has also identified it with Manasa. Bhuyan however, thinks the present image is nothing but the representation of Ananta, a form of Visnu. The image in question can be compared with the twelve-armed male figure<sup>5</sup> from Sonarang, district Dacca, Bangladesh. As not a single *ayudha* held in the hands of the deity is identifiable and as there is a controversy with regard to the sex of the divinity, the problem should be kept open at this stage.

P. D. Choudhury<sup>6</sup> has said that the five rock-cut sculptures chiselled just below on a separate rock, which have been already described along with other three images—one representing Visnu and the other Siva in the same row—should be regarded as female figures and he has identified them with Durga, wife of Siva. He has further commented that some scholars have wrongly identified a few images as those of Bodhisattvas. Possibly Choudhury made this comment in regard to a remark of S. Katakī.<sup>7</sup> It appears that the identifications of both the scholars are totally wrong. Bhuyan<sup>8</sup> has rightly pointed out their mistakes.

Stylistically, this group of rock-cut sculptures may be assigned to c. eighth or ninth century A.D. and as such we are in agreement with Bhuyan who has placed them in c. eighth century.<sup>9</sup> This row of sculptures can be compared with rock-cut sculptures from Bengal illustrated by R. D. Banerji.<sup>10</sup>

Above these sculptures behind the controversial twelve-handed deity, a few rock-cut images representing Visnu and Ganesa are noticed. Stylistically, they may be placed in the same period, i.e., c. eighth-ninth century A.D.

Further above at the top on a separate huge rock two miniature votive *stupas* are seen. Each of them is about 3' high. At the base of one of these three circles are noticed. The other has possibly two such circles at its base. On the tapering portion of each *stupa* is seen a raised square based hole, which it appears, is partially damaged. Towards a little north at a slightly lower level on a different rock in the same site is seen a half done similar miniature votive *stupa*.

One can visit a natural cave towards a little south of this

site where two Jaina images can be seen. The site is about ten minutes' walk. On the way, a rock-cut monolithic miniature votive *stupa* is found. It is bigger in size than the two others described earlier. At the top of this *stupa* there is no trace of raised based-hole, etc. It is in a better state of preservation.

A little south of this *stupa* is located the natural cave formed by two huge boulders. Inside is seen three rock-cut sculptures on the northern wall of the cave. Of these three images two represent Adinatha or Rsabhanatha in *Kayotsarga* attitude. The first image (135 cms. high) has a *dharma-cakra* symbol below the feet of the deity while the second figure (93 cms. in height) shows a Rsabha symbol at the feet. In both the cases the deity is made to stand naked in *samapadaasthanaka* attitude with hands hanging down below the knee level (*ajanulambita*). Kataki<sup>11</sup> and Choudhury<sup>12</sup> have wrongly identified them as *dvarapala* and Siva respectively.

The figures are in relief (not very high) and stylistically they may belong to c. eighth-ninth century. Bhuyan<sup>13</sup> has also offered the same views with regard to the identifications of the images and their dates. The third image represents Ganesa which may be dated on stylistic ground about the same period, if not later. On the eastern wall of this natural cave is seen an inscribed line of letters. P. D. Choudhury<sup>14</sup> and D. C. Sircar who made repeated attempts to read these obliterated letters have suggested that "the writings contain only some names of devotees or pilgrims and nothing else". They conjecture that these pilgrims visited this rocky place which looks like a cave and offered worship invoking the blessings of Lord Siva. On palaeographical ground Choudhury says the inscribed letters may be dated in eighth-ninth century.

Proceeding a little south-east from the house of the Sri-Surya Pahar Temple Committee, a tank can be reached. To the right bank of the tank there is a tree under which is a small modern shrine with C. I. sheet roof. In this shrine an *Aditya-cakra* sculptured on a block of stone is noticed. Here Kasyapa is shown seated in a cross-legged posture in the middle and around him are seen miniature figures of twelve Adityas, sons of Aditi,

wife of Kasyapa.<sup>15</sup> The details of the images cannot be recognised owing to their smallness. On the other hand, all the images are under a thick layer of vermillion. However a close observation reveals that the centrally seated male figure representing Kasyapa is four-faced and four-armed. The *ayudhas* held in the hands cannot be recognised. The fourth face is not shown and it is supposed to be hidden. Below the seat of the god is depicted something. Possibly, it is his *vahana* representing a swan. Each of the twelve miniature figures seated cross-legged is depicted one-faced and two-armed holding some object, possibly lotuses. This *Aditya-cakra* is sculptured in the same way as the *Navagraha-cakra* from Khiching, illustrated by J. N. Banerjea.<sup>16</sup>

However, the theme of our sculpture is quite different from Khiching *Navagraha-cakra*. As it appears, the *Aditya-cakra* in question was possibly used as a ceiling slab of a temple.<sup>17</sup> It may be noted that in that site old bricks and brickbats of the pre-Ahom style are lying scattered. In many ruined temple sites, in the pre-Ahom age, a *visva-padma*, i.e., a huge lotus inside a circle on a huge slab of stone used as ceiling slab of the original temple is noticed. It cannot be ruled out that the present slab containing the *Aditya-cakra* was used as ceiling slab of such a temple in lieu of the common *visva-padma* motif. In that case it may be inferred that this piece of *Aditya-cakra*, on stylistic consideration (which can be placed in a period not earlier than ninth-tenth century A.D.), was used as a ceiling slab of Surya temple after which the Sri-Surya Pahar might have been designated.

## II

In the pre-Ahom period Surya cult was popular in this locality. We find a stone *dvara-sirapatti* (door-lintel) showing some solar deities, a *dvara-sakha* showing some *avatars* of Visnu and a *dehali* (door-sill). All these three architectural pieces belong to a *dvara* (door-frame) of a temple. These three pieces were dug out from a temple site, except one *dvara-sakha* at the site itself, by the local people of Choudhuripara of Marnoi, about a







Visnu, etc., and the twelve-armed deity, possibly may be placed in the early Christian centuries on stylistic consideration. These votive *stupas* cannot be placed in the period to which the images of the site belong. For, the votive *stupas* of eighth-ninth century or tenth eleventh century bears relief of the images of Buddha normally. As for example, a stone votive *stupa* from Bihar, now being preserved in the Assam State Museum, belonging to eighth-ninth century A.D. bears on all the four sides a Buddha image in relief. Another two pieces of sculptured stone show votive *stupa* design on the body of which are seen Buddha images. In both the cases, unlike Sri-Surya Pahar votive *stupas*, the upper portions of the *stupa* are pointed and the first one bears a *chatra* design which can very well be seen in some of the Pala sculptures. On the other hand the upper portion of the votive *stupa* of our discussion is tapering. It appears, therefore, that S. K. Saraswati<sup>20</sup> has rightly placed them (the first two) in c. 100 A.D. or 100 B.C. Even if they do not belong to the period assigned by Saraswati, they should be placed in early Christian centuries and certainly they bear the message of the Hinayana doctrine of Buddhism. The existence of a pocket of Mahayana Buddhism at the place in the Pala period is proved by the terracotta plaque bearing two rows of stamped images of Bodhisattva, which can be compared with two plaques of terracotta showing stamped Bodhisattva images in two rows from Sabhar in the Dacca district of Bangladesh, illustrated by Bhattasali.<sup>21</sup>

The rock-cut caverns at Sri-Surya-Pahar, Pancharatna and Jogighopa hill should not be of later date. S. K. Saraswati thinks that they should be assigned to an early period. The name Jogighopa, as the local tradition goes, is derived from the caverns of the Jogighopa hill. Jogi means a monk and ghopa means *gompha* or *guha*, i.e., cave. The local tradition says that in the past monks used to do their penance in these small caves. Although these look very small from below, possibly somehow one could sit inside these caves. Someone may say that these caves might be used by the spies to watch the movement of enemies through the river Brahmaputra. But, this is a wrong idea as proved by the existence of similar small caverns at the site of

the rock-cut sculptures and votive *stupas* at Sri-Surya Pahar, about thirty miles off from Pancharatna and Jogighopa cave sites.

Similar small caves in Malabar hills near Cochín in Kerala are noticed by Y. D. Sharma<sup>22</sup> and others. These rock cut caves are also very small in size like ours. In his *Vedic Antiquities* G. J. Dubienil pleads for a Vedic origin for these rock cut caves of the Malabar hills. He further states that the Buddhist *stupa* is a reproduction of an earlier hollow Vedic *stupa*, which originally was probably a domical hut built of bamboo and wooden ribs, imitating hemispherical wooden huts of Aryan chiefs.<sup>23</sup> The local tradition has ascribed a Buddhist origin to the rock cut caves. They have sometimes been regarded as the abodes of hermits who flourished in these parts when Buddhism and Jainism were popular in Kerala.<sup>24</sup> Sharma on the basis of presence of some pots and a few other things opines that these small rock-cut caves were used as burial tombs by the Megalithic people and he has dated these caves in a period between 300 or 200 B.C. and 100 A.D.<sup>25</sup> However, it is surprising that no skeletal remains have been discovered in these small caves and so it is doubtful, as it appears, to say that these caves were burial tombs. Whatever may be the case, these caves, though located far off from Sri Surya Pahar are as small as ours and quite old as the caves in question, though no relation between these two groups is possible.

Thus the votive *stupas* at Sri Surya Pahar should be the earliest archaeological evidence of the historical period of Assam and also the rock cut caverns in the locality belong almost to the same period. The remains of Sri Surya Pahar prove that Buddhism and Jainism had some pockets in that region. The Brahmanical religion, which was accepted by all the Kamarupa Kings of the pre-Ahom period had also influence on the Sri Surya Pahar region.

The name of the hill must have been derived from some Surya temple or Surya cult that existed in the locality. The existence of Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism at the same site at Sri Surya Pahar and the remains of Buddhism and of Brahmanical icons at Pancharatna ruined temple site prove tolerance and harmony

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1. The first step is to identify the key components of the system. This involves understanding the hardware, software, and data involved in the process.

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# THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF LONDON

By  
JOHN STOW.

THE first part of this history is the most ancient, and is taken out of the old chronicles, and is written in Latin, and is the work of a learned man, who lived in the reign of King Henry the eighth. The second part is the most modern, and is written in English, and is the work of a learned man, who lived in the reign of King James the first. The third part is the most modern, and is written in English, and is the work of a learned man, who lived in the reign of King James the first.

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l-tsing. The Greek account *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (of first century A.D.) and some Arabic works are also important non-Indian literary sources for the study of this region.

## II

### EARLY PERIOD

Some scholars are of the view that the Kalitas of Assam are the remnants of a band of pre-Vedic<sup>2</sup> Aryans, but in the absence of any record, Puranic or otherwise, about the Kalitas, we have at present to begin with Bhagadatta, whom we find joining in the great Kuruksetra battle against the Pandavas.

The name Pragjyotisapura appears in the *Mahabharata* and in the *Ramayana* (Kisk. 42) and meant a city which had formerly been a seat of Jyotisa, i.e., astrological and astronomical learning. According to the *Kalika Purana*, in a previous age, staying in this place, Brahma left out a Nakshatra, and this accounts for the name Pragjyotisa (38-119). It seems that the Sakadvipi Brahmins while migrating to Kamarupa carried the memory of their father land and applied the name to their new homes a few centuries after Christ. These Brahmins are known in Bengal as Acharya and in Assam as Daivajna. Their ancestors were devoted to Jyotisa, computed almanacs on which depended the social and religious observances of the Hindus and wielded enormous influence thereby on the society.

According to the *Mahabharata*, Pragjyotisa was situated somewhere on the southern border of the Sakadvipa. We learn from the *Mahabharata* that during the military expedition of Arjuna, who went to exact tribute from the kings of northern quarter<sup>3</sup> he defeated the kings of the countries which lay north and those of Sakadvipa. With these kings he marched towards Pragjyotisa where Bhagadatta was the king. The latter is described in many places as the king of the Yavanas.

The story of the fight with Naraka,<sup>4</sup> the founder-king of Pragjyotisa, is found in the *Mahabharata* and in various Puranas.



Naraka was a powerful son of the earth who is said to have carried off the jewelled ear-rings of Aditi to his capital Pragjyotisapura and had captured the daughters of the Gods, the Siddhas, the Gandharvas and the Asuras. At the request of Indra, Krishna went to Naraka's impregnable castle and recovered the jewels after killing him. He also released the ladies imprisoned by Naraka.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Founder*

The *Kalikapurana* and *Yogini Tantra* preserve the names of several kings whose titles betray their aboriginal descent, and who were followed by Naraka, the founder of the ancient and famous city of Pragjyotisapura. According to the tradition Naraka ruled from the Karatoya river to the extreme outskirt of the Brahmaputra Valley. Bhagadatta, son of Naraka, was an ally of Duryodhana.<sup>6</sup> He owed allegiance to Jarasandha, the mighty emperor of Magadha, of whom whole of India stood in mighty terror. We find Bhagadatta the powerful king of Assam, mentioned in the Svayamvara of Draupadi and in the enumeration of Krishna in the Sabhaparva<sup>7</sup> of powerful kings who had bowed down to Jarasandha. After the death of Jarasandha, Bhagadatta was humbled by Arjuna. He joined the Kauravas in the great battle of Kurukshetra and wrought havoc on the Pandava forces with his well-equipped elephant battalions. In the Dronaparva, it is recorded that one day he nearly killed Bhima, and the reputed hero wriggled with difficulty out of the clutches of Bhagadatta's elephant and narrowly escaped with his life. However Arjuna killed him by a stratagem and not in a straight fight.

### *Pragjyotisa*

Kamarupa again is focussed in Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsa*. After defeating the mountaineers, Raghu reached Pragjyotisa<sup>8</sup> the land of the Kamarupas, having crossed the Lauhitya river. Pragjyotisa appears to have been used by Kalidasa in a territorial sense<sup>9</sup> while the Kamarupas in the sense of the people of Kamarupa, i.e., Assam.<sup>10</sup> It may have been the capital of the kingdom of Kamarupa.<sup>11</sup> It is curious that Mark Collins should

have remarked that Kalidasa referred to Pragjyotisa and Kamarupa as two distinct kingdoms.<sup>12</sup> It must be noted here that all the four verses<sup>13</sup> which deal with Pragjyotisa and Kamarupa embody a description of the conquest of ancient Assam alone.<sup>14</sup> According to verse 81 Raghu crosses the river Brahmaputra and makes the king of Pragjyotisa tremble with fear. Here, it seems that Kalidasa being of Gupta period perhaps recollects the treatment of Samudragupta with frontier states who are said to have gratified his imperious command (*prachanda sasana*) "by giving all kinds of taxes, obeying his orders and coming to perform obeisance".<sup>15</sup> Pragjyotisa has been identified with modern Gauhati.<sup>16</sup>

Kamarupa seems to have lain outside the empire of the Mauryan rulers. The Chinese pilgrims saw no monument of Asoka in that country. The victorious arms of Samudragupta must have produced a deep impression on the Pratyanta (for importance of the term, see *Divyavādāna*, p. 22) or frontier kings of North East India, the Himalayan region, and the tribal states of the Panjab, Western India, Malwa and Central Provinces, who are said to have gratified his imperious command (*prachanda sasana*) "by giving all kinds of taxes, obeying his orders and coming to perform obeisance". Kamarupa was an important kingdom which submitted to the mighty Gupta Emperor. During the reign of Mahasenagupta (son of Damodar Gupta) a strong monarchy was established in Kamarupa by a line of princes who claimed descent from Bhagadatta. King Susthitavarman (see Nidhanpur plates of this family) came into conflict with Mahasenagupta and was defeated. The mighty fame of Mahasenagupta, says the Apsad inscription, "marked with honour of victory in war over the illustrious Susthitavarman ... is still constantly sung on the banks of the river Lohitya".

King Harsa of Salastambha family was followed by Balavarman, and perhaps one or two others. (This is implied by the Haiyungthal plate of Harjjaravarman, though, on account of some lacunae, the meaning of the passage is not quite clear). The dynasty of Salastambha ruled from A.D. c. 800 to 1000. The kings were devotees of Siva, and their capital was Haruppesvara on the bank of the Lohitya. Although no detailed account of their

reign is known, it may be presumed that under Harjara and his descendants Kamarupa flourished as a powerful independent kingdom.<sup>17</sup> Subsequently the Pala ruler Devapala conquered Pragjyotisa (Assam).<sup>18</sup>

The products of Assam like silk and perfumes were well-known in Mauryan India. J. C. Roy was the first scholar to draw our attention to the fact that the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya contained references to the silk and perfumes produced in Assam.<sup>19</sup> In the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (first century A.D.) there is an interesting description of Assam regarding Sondvip Island and its trade of silk and Tejpat.<sup>20</sup> There is another confused account of the procurement, packing and marketing of the Tejpat. Tejpat in Sanskrit is called simply *patra*, and the *Periplus* actually calls the commodity by this Sanskrit name.

P. R. T. Gurdon in his monograph on the Khasis<sup>21</sup> gives an account of the extensive Tejpat gardens in the Khasi states. This commodity of everyday use among the Indians, has been mentioned in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (in the first century A.D.) as already stated.

The events and episodes related by both Hsueh Tsang and Hsueh Tsang show that Harsha achieved the right balance in his relationship with the subordinate kings. He gave them dear honour and importance, yet kept his distance.<sup>22</sup> Kalidasa, in his *Raghuvamsha*, ascribes the same policy to Raghu, who, deprived Mahendra of his glory but not of his territory.<sup>23</sup> The *Life of Hsueh Tsang* refers to some anomalous incidents in regard to the diplomatic relations between Kanauj and Kamarupa.<sup>24</sup> The Arab writers of the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. mention Kamarupa as an important kingdom of India, east of Bengal.

Pragjyotisa was a famous city according to both the epics. It is mentioned in the *Yagñikāntra* (I, 12). According to *Kalikapurana* (Sl. 173), it was looked upon as Indra's mansion by the king of Videha (XXXVIII, 152). In the Bargaon grant of Ratanapala the city of Pragjyotisa is referred to as impregnable and rendered beautiful by the Lauhitya or Brahmaputra river (*EI*, XII, pp. 37-38).

The *Mahabharata* (II. 25 ; III. 12 ; V. 18 ; VIII. 5) refers to it as a *mleccha* and an *asura* kingdom, ruled by Bhagadatta, and bordered by the tribes of the Kiratas and Chinas. According to *Raghuvamsa* it lay evidently to the north of the Brahmaputra river.<sup>25</sup> The Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva refers to the *mandala* of Kamarupa and the *visaya* of Pragjyotisa, which suggests that Pragjyotisa was the larger administrative division including Kamarupa. It seems to have included not only the Kamarupa country but also a major portion of North Bengal and perhaps also of North Bihar. It was ruled by Indrapala who was styled as Maharajadhiraja.<sup>26</sup> Here the realisation of taxes from the tenants and the infliction of punishments were rare.<sup>27</sup>

In *Abhidhanachintamani* (IV. 22) of Hemachandra there is a mention of Pragjyotisa Kamarupa. According to *Trikanda* of Purushottama Pragjyotisa is Kamarupa. The *Brihat-samhita* (XIV. 6) mentions it. According to the *Kalikapurana* (XXXVII) the capital town of Pragjyotisa has been identified with Kamakhya or Gauhati. The *Kavyamimamsa* (ch. XVII) of Rajasekhara places Pragjyotisa in the east.

### *Kamarupa*

Kamarupa is bounded on the north by Bhutan, on the east by the districts of Darrang and Nowgong, on the south by the Khasi hills and on the west by Goalpara. It is mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar inscription as one of the frontier states outside the limits of Gupta empire of which the capital was Pragjyotisapura, identified with modern Gauhati. According to *Yoginitantra*<sup>28</sup> the kingdom of Kamarupa comprised the whole of the Brahmaputra (Lauhitya) valley together with Rangpur and Cooch Bihar.<sup>29</sup> In the Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva, the village granted is said to have been situated in Kamarupamandala and Pragjyotisabhukti.<sup>30</sup> The king of Kamarupa used to pay taxes to Samudragupta.<sup>31</sup> According to the Salimpur inscription dated eleventh century A.D., a Brahmin belonging to Varendri was given gold coins by Jayapala, a king of Kamarupa.<sup>32</sup> It is Kia-mo-leu-po of Hiuen Tsang. The territory is estimated at 10,000 li or 1,667 miles in circuit. This large extent shows that it must have been comprised

the whole valley of the Brahmaputra river, together with Kusa-Vihara and Bhutan.<sup>33</sup>

It was low and moist, and the crops regular. The climate was genial and the people were honest. They were hard-working students, and were of small stature and black-looking. The pilgrim did not see any Asokan monument there. The people did not believe in Buddhism. But some hold that a very debased form of later Buddhism was prevalent in Kamarupa for some centuries.<sup>34</sup>

Deva temples were many in number, and various systems had professed adherents. The king was a lover of learning and his subjects followed his example. Though the king was not a Buddhist, he treated the accomplished monks with due respect.

Kamarupa, according to Sandhyakaranandin, the author of *Ramacarita*, was conquered by Ramapala. It was also conquered repeatedly by a Candra king. Early in the thirteenth century A.D. the Ahom chiefs made themselves masters of this country.

The *Agni Purana* gives a list of the important holy places. Kamarupa is one of them.<sup>35</sup>

### *Kamakhya*

Kamakhya is a place of pilgrimage in Assam.<sup>36</sup> The temple of Sakti, Siva's wife, at Kamakhya near Gauhati was famous in ancient times. It was a great centre of sensual form of worship inculcated in the Tantras. There was a deity named Mahamaya who was ever ready to fulfil human desires. The temple of Kamakhya on the Nilachala hill near Gauhati and the temple of Hayagriva Madhava at Hajo, about fifteen miles by road north-west of Gauhati, are important temples.<sup>37</sup>

The Umachal rock inscription refers to the independent worship of Balabhadra in Assam about the fifth century A.D.<sup>38</sup>

### *Dancing Girls*

The Tantrika works from Assam have references to similar dancing girls, particularly in the Siva Temple. These devadasis in Assam were termed *natis*. The Tejpur grant of Vanamala<sup>39</sup> records the dedication of the *natis* to a Siva temple.<sup>40</sup> This ins-



titution existed not only in the Siva temple at Doobi in Kamarupa but also in the Buddhist-Vaisnava temple at Ilajo.<sup>41</sup> I-tsing also refers to girls, who delighted the Buddhist deities with their dance.<sup>42</sup>

### *Brahmanism*

The Brahmans of Kamarupa (Assam) are known to have migrated from other places. The grants of the Ganga king Anantavarman (A.D. 922) reveal that the king had granted lands to Visnusomacharya from Kamarupa.<sup>43</sup> A grant of Paramara King Vakpati Raja (A.D. 981) proves that he granted lands to Vamanasvami of Kamarupa.<sup>44</sup>

From the Silimpur stone slabs, we learn that a Brahmana scholar of Assam named Prahasa refused to accept 900 gold coins in cash and a gift of landed property (*Sasana*) yielding an income of 1,000 coins from a very powerful king of Kamarupa named Jayapaladeva.<sup>45</sup>

### *Tax*

In the land grants of the Palas and other contemporary dynasties besides the usual land revenue we have references to *uparikara*, *dasaparadha* and *cauroddharama*. In some inscriptions of Assam, *cauroddharama* is included in the list of oppressions from which the donee is exempted.<sup>46</sup> Choudhury proposed to interpret the term as the money and food to be given to the police officers who might enter the land in connection with the apprehension of thieves.<sup>47</sup> U. N. Ghoshal thinks that it was a land tax imposed upon villagers for protection against thieves.<sup>48</sup>

### *Ownership of Land*

The Bhatera inscription (A.D. 1049) states that Govinda-Kesvadeva donated to the God Siva 375 balas of land with 296 houses in various villages and also gave many attendants who lived on the donated land.<sup>49</sup> Vanamala is said to have made to the temple of Hatakesvara Siva a gift consisting of villages, men,

prostitutes and elephants. In the inscription the people who are attached to a deity as deriving benefits from religious grants are either agriculturists or men belonging to occupations like craftsmen, including cowherds, a bell-metal worker, a barber, a washerman, a boatman and an ivory worker.<sup>50</sup> The term *praja* was employed for them. The kings claimed some sort of ownership over the inhabitants of the villages in their jurisdiction. Vallabhadeva (A.D. 1184-85) granted seven villages to an alms-house.<sup>51</sup>

The term *uparikara* would in any case indicate that it was an extra tax of oppressive character charged over and above the the land revenue. In the grants of Ratnapala, Indrapala and Balavarman we have mention of *uparikara* tax among lists of oppressions from which the land should be exempted (D. Barnett treats *uparikara* as analogous to the Tamil *melvaiaim*) by the crown.

### *River-Traffic*

In Ancient India in comparison with roads rivers were considered to be a better and safer means of travelling and of transporting merchandise. The *Caryapadas*<sup>52</sup> often illustrate their philosophy, the construction of the boats and the actual method of plying them. River-traffic was very common in eastern India and the boatmen had gained an intimate knowledge of the course of the rivers and their depth at different places.<sup>53</sup> Some of the rivers in Assam also seem to have been used for transport and travelling.<sup>54</sup>

### *Bridges*

It is significant to observe that though bridges seem to have been constructed in the hilly areas of Assam and Kashmir, they were not much in use in the plains. From the Muslim accounts we learn that there were in Assam stone bridges over the rivers and the soldiers of Assam defeated the attack of Bakhtyar Khalji by destroying one of these.<sup>55</sup>

### *Routes Through Assam*

As early as the second half of the seventh century the sea route between India and China was more in use than the overland route. The decline of the trade route across Central Asia was to a great extent due to the loss of the Chinese interest in it. Chinese Government laid much emphasis on sea-trade in its policy.

From very early times we have references to routes connecting India and China through the hills of Assam and Burma and through Sikkim, the Chumbi Valley and Tibet.

From Hiuen Tsang it appears that Kamarupa had contacts with China.<sup>56</sup> In the early medieval period the route across upper Burma came in for greater use. The itinerary of Kia-Tau (A.D. 785-805) gives a very detailed account of the land route from Tonkin to Kamarupa. The route passed through Yunnansen, Yunan-foci and Talifoci; going westwards it crossed the Salween at Young-Chang and then led to Chou-Ko-leang to the east of Momerin between Shiveli and the Salween. From Chou-Ko-leang the main route passing through Si-li (halfway between Ta-gaung and Mandalay), Toumeri (Pagau) Prome and the Arakan mountains reached Kamarupa. The minor route going to the west of Chou-Ko-leang reached Teng Ch'ong (Moulmein) and then passing through Li-Shonei (on the Irrawaddy near Bhamo) and crossing the river Magameg finally reached Kamarupa through the town of Nagause.<sup>57</sup> In the tenth century some three hundred missionaries from China on their journey to India used this route through Yunan.<sup>58</sup> In due course of time the land route had fallen into disfavour in comparison with the sea route. However as late as the sixteenth century the route continued to be in use. Buddhagupta, an Indian Buddhist monk of sixteenth century, mentions in his biography the well-known land route connecting Kamarupa and Burma and is said to have used this route himself in travelling from Gaubati to Pagau.<sup>59</sup>

From the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* we learn that Bengal received large number of horses which merchants brought through this

route.<sup>60</sup> Between Kamarupa and Tibet it speaks of thirty-five mountain passes through which horses were brought to Lakhnauti in Bengal. It was a profitable trade route passing through Tibet and Assam to China that led the Mongols and also the Indian kings to make efforts to dominate these routes. Bakhtyar Khalji advanced along the Assam Valley. Malik Yuzbek undertook a similar enterprise in 1256-7. Muhammed Tughluq also sent an expedition against China but with no more success than the earlier expeditions mentioned above.<sup>61</sup> The policy of Bhaskaravarman aimed at active promotion of shipping. He had 30,000 ships.<sup>62</sup>

### Cowries

It seems that for daily transactions cowries had come to be very largely used in early medieval India. Fa-Hien observes that even in his period the Indians were using cowries in buying and selling commodities.<sup>63</sup>

The records of early medieval period show that cowries were in regular use. The Tezpur (Assam) rock inscription of Harjara lays down a penalty of 100 cowries for infringement of certain state regulations.<sup>64</sup>

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- <sup>19</sup> *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society (JBORS)*, 1917.
- <sup>20</sup> *IHQ*, vol. XXII, pp. 249-252 (N. K. Bhattasali).  
*Science and Culture*, Nov. 1941 ; Gordon, *Khasis*, p. 47.
- <sup>21</sup> *The Khasis*, London, 1907, p. 47.
- <sup>22</sup> *Harsacarita*, p. 220.
- <sup>23</sup> IV. 43.
- <sup>24</sup> *Life of Hiuen Tsang*, p. 172. Watters, *Ch Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, I, p. 349. *Beal Buddhist Records of the Western World*, 1, p. 216.
- <sup>25</sup> *Raghuvamsha*, IV. 83-84.
- <sup>26</sup> Gauhati Copper Plate Grant of Indrapala of Pragjyotisa.
- <sup>27</sup> Nowgong Copper Plate.
- <sup>28</sup> I. 11, 60-61.
- <sup>29</sup> *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, XIV, p. 331.
- <sup>30</sup> *EI*, II, 348 and *EI*, II, 355.
- <sup>31</sup> *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III, pp. 6-8.
- <sup>32</sup> *EI*, XIII, 292, 295.
- <sup>33</sup> *Abhidhancintamani*, VI, 22.
- <sup>34</sup> K. L. Barua, *Early History of Kamarupa*, p. 304.
- <sup>35</sup> *Agni Purana*, Ch. 109, 116, etc.
- <sup>36</sup> *Brihat-Dharma Purana*, I. 14 ; *Kalika Purana*, Ch. 62.
- <sup>37</sup> For further details see Banikanta Kakati, *The Mother Goddess Kamakhya*, 1948.
- <sup>38</sup> P. N. Bhattacharyya, *Kamarupasanavali*, Intro., pp. 8, 22 ; *EI*, XXX, p. 92.
- <sup>39</sup> Verse 24.
- <sup>40</sup> *JASB*, IX, pp. 766f.
- <sup>41</sup> P. C. Chowdhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the twelfth century A.D.*, p. 350.
- <sup>42</sup> Takakusu, J. A., *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and Malaya Archipelago* by I-Tsing, p. 147.
- <sup>43</sup> *EI*, XXVI, pp. 62-68.
- <sup>44</sup> *EI*, XXIII, p. 109.
- <sup>45</sup> *EI*, XIII, pp. 290f., v. 22.
- <sup>46</sup> *EI*, XXX, 205-9 ; XXXII, 288-92.
- <sup>47</sup> *History of the Civilization of Assam*, p. 297.



- <sup>48</sup> *IHQ*, V, 277-9.
- <sup>49</sup> *EI*, XIX, 279-86 ; *JASB*, IX, 1840, pp. 766ff, v. 24.
- <sup>50</sup> Tejpur Grant, *JASB*, IX, 1040, pp. 766ff, v. 24.
- <sup>51</sup> *EI*, V, 183ff, VV, 179, 22.
- <sup>52</sup> *Buddha Gan O' Doha*, vv. 33, 38, 49 ; see also *Caryagitikosa*, Introduction, p. 21.
- <sup>53</sup> *Uktivvyaktiprakarana*, p. 46, 11, p. 397.
- <sup>54</sup> P. C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam*, p. 379.
- <sup>55</sup> Raverty, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, pp. 569f.
- <sup>56</sup> *Si-Yu-Ki*, II, pp. 195-98. See also P. C. Bagchi, *India and China*, pp. 200f.
- <sup>57</sup> P. C. Bagchi, *op. cit.*, pp. 18f.
- <sup>58</sup> R. C. Majumdar, *Hindu Colonies in the Far East*, pp. 226f.
- <sup>59</sup> *IHQ*, VII, 683-701.
- <sup>60</sup> Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by Its Historians*, II, pp. 311f.
- <sup>61</sup> Yule, *Cathay*, I, pp. 78f.
- <sup>62</sup> *Life of Hiuen Tsang*, pp. 171f ; Watters, I, 348. The number seems to be exaggerated.
- <sup>63</sup> Legge, *Fa-Hien*, p. 43.
- <sup>64</sup> *JBORS*, 1917, pp. 508f.

# SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF ASSAM : ANCIENT PERIOD

DR. S. N. SARMA  
(*Gauhati University*)

## I

THOUGH dearth of adequate materials for the reconstruction of the history of the ancient period of Assam handicapped the early historians to present a comprehensive account, the discovery of a series of inscriptions, a few historical sites and some new source-materials during the last fifty years considerably eased the task of historians. Even then, some of the lacunae in the political history before the fourth century A.D. and between the fifth and twelfth century A.D. have not yet been completely bridged for want of contemporary reliable materials.

The ancient period of Assam, as dealt by most of the present-day historians, covers a period extending over more than a thousand years and roughly starts from the early centuries of the Christian era to the end of the twelfth century A.D. Beyond this historical period lies the pre-historic and proto-historic periods of epics and puranic mythology, preceded by neolithic and megalithic cultures, details of which have not yet been fully explored. Naturally, therefore, our discussion about the sources of history of ancient Assam will be confined mainly to the proto-historical and historical sources. The former is represented by epics, puranas and other earliest literary and anthropological materials and the latter by historical evidences furnished by epigraphs, foreign accounts, monuments and sculptures.

The sources so far tapped by scholars for the reconstruction of the ancient history of Assam which was known as Pragjyotisa

or Kamarupa, may be broadly categorised under the following heads :

- (1) early literary sources,
- (2) foreign accounts, and
- (3) archaeological evidences.

The last source comprises of (i) epigraphs, (ii) monuments, and (iii) numismatic evidence. So far as the last one is concerned no coin minted before the fifteenth century has yet been discovered. A few years back some labourers while working in a place in the Tezpur subdivision came across a few coins bearing a letter resembling 'va' (व) of early inscriptions of Assam. Dr. P. C. Choudhuri is of the view that the coins were either issued by Vanamalavarman of the ninth century or Vallabhadeva or Vaidyadeva of the twelfth century. It has not, however, been convincingly proved that these few coins belong to the pre-Ahom period of Assam. Even if we accept this conjecture, it must be admitted that the numismatic evidence at our disposal is practically next to zero.

## II LITERARY SOURCE

Literary evidences could be conveniently classed under two headings : (i) those relating to the proto-historical period prior to the advent of the Varman dynasty towards the middle of the fourth century A.D., and (ii) those that throw light on Assam from the fourth century onwards till the establishment and consolidation of the Ahom rule in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries of the Christian era. Evidences containing references to Pragjyotisa or Kamarupa, its extent, the migration of the Aryans to it, geographical nature of the country, mythological account connected with this part of India and the epic and puranic references to its kings and similar other information relating to the proto-historical period are generally available from some of the later Vedic literature like *Satapatha Brahmana* and *Sankhyayana Grihyasamgraha*.<sup>1</sup>

The two epics, especially the *Mahabharata*, and some of the puranas and tantras also throw some light on the location and

geographical and religious conditions of the region. For instance, the *Kiskindhya-kanda* of the *Ramayana* refers to Naraka's city of Pragjyotisa on the Varaha mountain.<sup>2</sup> The *Mahabharata* mentions Bhagadatta, King of Pragjyotisa, as a powerful monarch having *Kiratas* and *Chinas* as his soldiers.<sup>3</sup> *Arthasastra* of Kautilya refers to such places of Kamarupa as Suvarnakudya, Paralauhitya, Jonga (ka), Gamera (ka) in connection with the production of silk, scented wood and other economic products. According to the commentator Bhattaswami all the above places were located in Kamarupa.<sup>4</sup>

The second category of literary sources bearing historical references and information relates to the period from the fourth century to the beginning of the thirteenth century. Some of the puranas of this period also throw some light on the geographical situation and the religious condition of ancient Assam. The *Garuda-purana* mentions Kamarupa and Kamakhya as centres of pilgrimage (chap. 98) and the *Markandeya-purana* mentions Pragjyotisa, Udayacala, Lauhitya and Kamarupa as countries in the east of India. The *Vayu-purana* includes Pragjyotisa and Lauhitya along with other countries of the east. The *Mahabhagavata-purana* (not *Bhagavata-purana*) eulogises Kamarupa, Kamakhya and Lauhitya in five chapters (11-12, 76-78). According to Dr. R. C. Hazra this purana was composed towards the end of the tenth century.

Of all the puranas the *Kalika-purana*, considered to be a product of ancient Assam, contains invaluable materials regarding religious, social and political condition of Assam round about the tenth century A.D. Glorification of Kamakhya and Kamarupa is also found in the *Brihaddharma-purana*.

References to Kamarupa as the land of mystic cult are found scattered in many works of tantric origin. Kamarupa-Kamakhya has been recognised in most of the tantric works as one of the four principal *pithas* for easy practisement of tantric observances. *Hevajratantra*, *Yogini-tantra*, *Kamakhya-tantra*, *Akulavira-tantra*, *Kamakhya-guhyasiddhi*, *Haragauri-samvada* and *Kularnava-tantra* contain many valuable information regarding religious history of ancient Assam during the Tantric-Buddhist period. Some of the

above works no doubt belong to the later period ; nevertheless, they contain materials of earlier traditions throwing light on religious-cultural aspects of Kamarupa. *Haragauri-samvada* and *Yogini-tantra*, written in Assam during the medieval period, provide information about some ruling dynasties and kings of ancient and medieval Assam.

Some of the Tantric-Buddhist works of Nepal and Tibet including *Pag-Som-Zon-Zan*, *Dakarnava*, and *Caryapadas* and *Tales of Lama Taranath* also supply sporadic information about the early middle period of Assam.

The last but not the least important literary source is the contemporary literary works (poetry, drama, etc.), such as *Harsa-carita* of Banabhatta, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, Sandhyakaranandi's *Ramapala-carita*, Bilhana's *Vikramankadeva-carita* and a few other literary works composed between the seventh and thirteenth centuries of the Christian era. From *Harsa-carita* we get a fair account of Sriharsa's friendship with Bhaskaravarman of Kamarupa. The *Rajatarangini* mentions Queen Amritaprabha of Kashmir as the daughter of a Kamarupa king. It also narrates Lalitaditya's victorious campaign as far as the banks of the river Lauhitya.<sup>5</sup> Bilhana's work refers to the invasion of Kamarupa by Vikramankadeva of the Chalukya dynasty towards the latter half of the eleventh century.<sup>6</sup> *Ramapala-carita* describes the conquest of Kamarupa by Mayana, the general of Ramapala of Gauda.<sup>7</sup> Rajasekhara in his *Karpuramanjari*, a sattaka, describes Mahendrapala, the Pratihara king of Kanauj, as conqueror of Champa, Radha, Harikela and Kamarupa. This may be a panegyric glorification of the patron king, for the invasion of Kamarupa by the Pratihara king is not corroborated by plausible evidence so far.

The literary sources comprising all the categories of works noted above serve only as a supplementary or subsidiary material in reconstructing the past. They are helpful in determining the antiquity of names like Pragjyotisa, Kamarupa and the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra), location of the country, its earliest inhabitants and the probable time of Aryanisation. The epics, puranas and a few early Brahminical works mainly contribute towards provid-



ing information regarding ancient Assam, but some of the later literary works specially composed after the fourth century bear evidence of political events concerning Assam. These are important from the standpoint of reinforcing original materials supplied by the archaeological source.

### III FOREIGN ACCOUNTS

The next important source is the accounts left by the foreign travellers. This source may be subdivided into

- (i) Chinese accounts of travel,
- (ii) Classical Greek and Roman accounts of India, and
- (iii) Muslim accounts.

(i) The accounts of the *Shung Shu* (A.D. 420-479) record the sending of two contingents of envoys from India to China of which one was sent from the Kapili valley within the present district of Nowgong in Assam. Yuan Chwang's account containing his description of travel to Kamarupa and his narratives regarding the kingdom of Bhaskaravarman is an invaluable record for the assessment of Bhaskaravarman. In a subsequent Chinese work, *Tang-Shu*, the large river *Ko-Lu-Tu* mentioned here is evidently Karatoya that marked the western boundary of ancient Assam. The same work mentions Kamarupa as *Kamopo*.<sup>8</sup> The account of Wang-huen-Tse's mission throws light on the history of the period after the death of Harsa, the usurption of the throne by Arjunasva, and Bhaskaravarman's cultural relation with China and the part played by him after Harsa's death. Bhaskara's interest in Chinese religion and philosophy is also testified by two other Chinese mission which came to India after Yuan-Chwang.<sup>9</sup>

(ii) Assamese historians, notably K. L. Barua and Dr. P. C. Choudhury, have tried to identify some of the people and places mentioned by Greek and Roman classical writers like Megasthenes, Strabo, Pliny and work like *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* and Ptolemy's *Geography* but their identification still remains a matter of conjecture. Nevertheless some valuable information about

the eastern region of India (Prasii, Gangaridai) and its people are available from these occidental accounts. Some of these names occurring in these accounts have been identified by Barua and Choudhury with some place-names, river-names and tribes of Assam. Thus, 'Kirrhadia' mentioned by Ptolemy has been identified with the country inhabited by the kiratas or the Mongoloid tribes in the north-eastern region. Identification of 'Damassai', 'Nangalosai', 'Barrhai', 'Indoi', 'Koudoutai' mentioned by Ptolemy, and 'Mandai', 'Colubae', 'Abali' by Pliny with Dimasa, Nagaloka, Barahi, Hindu, Kalita, Mande (Garó) and Abor respectively is still a matter of pure conjecture.<sup>10</sup>

Whether the land of 'This' could be equated with Pragjyotisa, or whether the country of Seres or Chryse could be identified with some parts of Assam, or the rivers Oudanes, Dyardanes and Doanes mentioned by Strabo and Ptolemy could be the Brahmaputra is still a moot point; but considering the nature of the country or the places mentioned by them and the products of those countries or places, it is not unlikely that many of the place-names or tribes mentioned by them must have belonged to the present north-eastern region including Assam. In short, the accounts of the classical Greek and Roman writers contribute to our knowledge of the proto-historical period of Assam.

(iii) Alberuni's account and Minhazuddin's *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* of the eleventh and thirteenth centuries respectively give some account of *Kamrup* or *Kamrud* of the early period. The latter work not only gives an account of the disastrous invasion of Mahmmed Bin Bakhtiyar in 1206 and the subsequent invasion of Nasiruddin, son of Iltutmish, in 1227 A.D.

*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* also gives an account of the third invasion of Kamarupa under Malik Yuz-Bak which ended with a disastrous consequence for the invader. Later Muslim historians, such as Kazim of *Alamgirnamah* fame, Shihabuddin Talish who accompanied Mir-Zumla in his Assam campaign in the seventeenth century, *Baharistan-e-Ghaibi* by Mirza Nathan and *Riyas-us-Salat* by Abdus Salam supply some information about the Muslim-Assamese contact and conflicts during the medieval period.

## IV ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCE

(i) *Numismatic Evidence* : It has already been stated that there is hardly any reliable numismatic evidence to support epigraphic and other materials. Recovery of a few coins bearing the letter 'va' on one side has not in any way strengthened the hands of the historians for want of proper identification. It may be mentioned incidentally that King Jayapala of the Brahmapala dynasty made a *tulapurusa* gift of nine hundred gold coins to a Brahmana named Prahasa.<sup>12</sup>

(ii) *Epigraphs* : Epigraphs so far recovered are of three varieties, (1) those engraved on rocks, (2) copper plates, and (3) clay seals. These epigraphs beside tracing the genealogies of kings of different dynasties, record donation of lands and gifts, names and ancestry of donees, important achievements of the kings and diplomatic relation with and conquest of neighbouring kingdoms. Unfortunately, excepting one or two, the inscriptions do not contain any date.

*Rock Epigraphs* : The rock inscription of Surendravarman, identified with Mahendravarman of the fifth century, records the dedication of a temple to Balabhadraswami. The inscription, generally known as Umacala inscription, is the earliest one so far recovered.

(2) Badaganga rock inscription of Bhutivarman, the great grand-father of Bhaskaravarman (sixth century).

(3) Tezpur rock inscription of Harjjaravarman (Gupta era 510).

(4) Silimpur grant of Jayapala which records *Tulapurusa* gift of the king (twelfth century).

(5) Kanai-Barasi rock inscription in North Gauhati recording the destruction of the Muslim army under Mahmmed-Bin-Bakhtiyar (1206 A.D.).

(6) Gachtal stone inscription found at Gachtal, Nowgong (c. thirteenth century).

*Copper-Plate Inscriptions :*

(1) Dobi grant of Bhaskaravarman (seventh century)

- (2) Nidhanpur grant of Bhaskaravarman (seventh century)
- (3) Haiyungthal grant of Harjjaravarman (ninth century)
- (4) Tezpur grant of Vanamalavarmadeva ( " " )
- (5) Parbatiya plates of Vanamalavarman ( " " )
- (6) Uttarabarbil plates of Balavarman (tenth century)
- (7) Nowgong plates of Balavarman ( " " )
- (8) Ulubari plates of Balavarman ( " " )
- (9) Bargaon plates of Ratnapala (eleventh century)
- (10) Suaikuchi plates of Ratnapala ( " " )
- (11) Gauhati plates of Indrapala ( " " )
- (12) Guakuchi plates of Indrapala ( " " )
- (13) Gachtal inscription of Gopala ( " " )
- (14) Khanamukhi grant of Dharmapala (twelfth century)
- (15) Puspabhadra grant of Dharmapala ( " " )
- (16) Subhankarapataka plates of Dharmapala ( " " )
- (17) Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva ( " " )
- (18) Grant of Vallabhadeva ( " " )

*Inscriptions of Other Parts of India Shedding Light on Assam*

(1) Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta. It refers to Kamarupa and Davaka (present Davaka) as *pratyanta* kingdoms.

(2) Aphsad inscription of Adityasena mentioning the victory of Mahasenagupta over Susthitavarman of Kamarupa.

(3) Pasupati inscription of King Jayadeva II of Nepal which mentions King Harsadevavarman of Kamarupa as conqueror of Gauda, Kalinga and Kosala.

(4) Samangada inscription of the Rastrakuta king Dantidurga mentioning the clash between Harsadeva and Kirtivarman of the western Chalukya power.

(5) Bhagalpur grant of Narayanapala of Gauda which refers to the diplomatic relation among Pragjyotisa, Gauda and Orissa during Devapala's reign.

(6) Deopara inscription of Vijayasena mentioning the subjugation of Kamarupa.

(7) Madhainagar grant of Laksmansena who is said to have defeated the Kamarupa king.

### (iii) *Monuments*

Extensive remains of ruined and damaged monuments beginning from the fifth century to the medieval period are seen lying scattered in an uncared state in many places of historical importance. Assam, being a land of frequent earthquakes, heavy rainfall and devastating floods, did not allow any of its earlier monuments to stand in tact even to the later medieval times. Extensive ruins and fragments of ancient temples and other buildings are noticed in Gauhati (Pragjyotisapur), Tezpur, Yogijan, Davaka, Numaligarh, Suryapahar and many other places. Some of them have been described by Westmacott, Hannay, and Dalton in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. K. N. Dixit and R. D. Banerjee in their annual report to the Archaeological Survey of India, 1923-24, 1925-26, have given accounts of some of the remains of ancient architecture in Assam. R. M. Nath brought to light some of the ruins of the Kapili valley, mainly those of Yogijan and Davaka in the *Indian Culture* and the *Journal of the Assam Research Society*. In addition to the temple ruins and scattered remnants of ancient architecture, a vast number of sculpture and iconographical specimens bear witness to the cultural attainment of ancient Assam, some of which are being preserved in the State Museum of Assam.

Local chronicles (*Buranjis*) which were composed after the coming of the Ahoms sporadically throw light on some of the kings of the earlier period.

## V DEPENDABILITY OF SOURCE MATERIALS

Medieval Assam from the thirteenth century onwards is fortunate enough in having a large number of dependable materials for writing the history of the period in the shape of local chronicles, contemporary accounts of the Muslim historians besides archaeological materials like inscriptions, standing monuments and a large number of coins issued by different kings. But so far as the ancient period is concerned we have to rely mainly on epigraphic evidences occasionally supplemented by



literary and other testimonies. The ancient Indian mind, though highly developed in several aspects, lacked historical sense as we understand today. Even historical works like *Rajatarangini* and *Harsa-carita* were treated like kavyas with highly embellished descriptions and poetic fancies. Therefore, the historians had to sift their materials and judge their reliability on the basis of more than one corroborative evidence. In Assam also, for want of direct historical narratives dealing with the ancient period the historians have had to utilise all the available sources however scanty their information might be, to present a connected and complete account of the period.

Of all the sources mentioned above epigraphs of the region, more than twenty in number, beginning from the fifth to the twelfth centuries of the Christian era are the most important documents being the basic materials for the reconstruction of the history of the period. There are, no doubt, some exaggerated and hyperbolic descriptions in the panegyric lines eulogising the lineage and exploits of the kings, but the basic historical facts noted in the epigraphs are generally found to be reliable. When discrepancies between contemporary epigraphs are noticed, they are very much limited in number, historians had to exercise their discriminating faculty by taking into account all circumstantial evidences to determine the probable truth.

So far as other archaeological materials like sculpture, monuments, etc., are concerned, they only give a general idea of the cultural level attained during the period without providing any political information. We do not know who actually constructed the temples or the palace-complex now in complete ruins, but from the style of architecture and the nature and characteristics of the sculptures the period or the approximate time of their construction could be determined. The existing architectural remains and sculptures recovered so far, according to connoisseurs, belong to the period between the ninth and twelfth centuries A.D.

So far as the literary sources are concerned they have been mostly utilised to supplement the information supplied by the archaeological sources. Epics, puranas and the post-Vedic literature are cited to prove the antiquity of Pragjyotisa in the cultural



map of India. Some of the later works of the Gupta and the post-Gupta eras, such as *Harsa-carita* and *Rajatarangini* shed light on some aspects of the political history also and adequately fill the gaps left by the regional sources.

Accounts of the Chinese travellers, especially those of Yuan Chwang and Wang-Huen-Tse's mission are invaluable in determining the role of Bhaskaravarman as the most powerful monarch of Eastern India in the seventh century. Some of the accounts of Muslim historians of the medieval period, notably *Tobaqat-i-Nasiri* by Minhaj and *Riyaz-us-Salatin* by Abdus Salam supply dependable materials of the first and second Muslim invasions of Kamarupa during the early part of the thirteenth century. Classical Greek and Roman writers' accounts of India, especially of Eastern India, give some information of the commercial products, names of places and rivers and tribes of Eastern India including Assam. Anthropological data, such as primitive implements, celts, neoliths and megaliths found in Assam as well as some primitive beliefs and customs still lingering among certain tribes help us in having an idea of the pre-historic primitive society in the eastern region of India. On the whole, a comprehensive history of ancient Assam is dependent on the proper and objective utilisation of the different relevant sources with discerning eyes.

## VI UTILISATION OF SOURCE-MATERIALS SO FAR

Although some of the local epigraphs came to light in the nineteenth century, no attempt worth the name to write the history of ancient Assam was made till the fourth decade of the present century due mainly to paucity of adequate materials. The first attempt to write the history of Assam was made by Peter Wade in his *Account of Assam* (1800 A.D.), but here the ancient period has not been dealt at all. In Robinson's *Descriptive Account of Assam* (1841) also no notice is taken of the ancient period. Gunabhiram Barua who may be credited with writing of the first systematic history of Assam (1884) has failed to do justice to the pre-Ahom period as the materials at his disposal were too meagre for a detailed treatment. He, however, gives a very brief

account of the mythological kings and a few kings of the pre-Ahom period relying mainly on sketchy and unconnected accounts of some medieval chronicles. Sir Edward Gait's *History of Assam* (1905, 1st edn.), otherwise a very systematic reliable work on medieval Assam, could devote only fourteen pages in his work to tracing the history of the pre-Ahom period. Even the second edition (1926) failed to do justice to the period. He has, however, mentioned the three important dynasties and their achievements in a nutshell, mentioning some of the inscriptions recovered and deciphered till then.

The late Padma Nath Bhattacharyya, a pioneer in the field of research in Assam, published his *Kamrupa Sasanavali* in 1926 where he not only published the texts of twelve inscriptions of the pre-Ahom period with Bengali translation and copious notes but also gave a chronological account of the Kamarupa kings in his long introduction. The *Early History of Kamarupa* by K. L. Barua, published in 1933, removed a long-felt want in the field of early history of north-eastern India. The work, starting with pre-historic period of Pragjyotisa, tries to present a comprehensive account of all the ruling dynasties excepting that of the Ahoms, up to the rise of the Koch power in the sixteenth century. He has also assessed the cultural and political achievements of the ruling dynasties of the pre-Ahom period. Barua has tried to tap all the sources of the history of the ancient period including the foreign accounts. He also contributed a large number of papers to different research journals on various aspects of ancient Assam and these have been published collectively in the posthumous work *Studies in the Early History of Assam* (1973). In fact, Barua's pioneering works on the early history of Kamarupa constitute the basic structure on which the superstructure of the two subsequent works of Dr. B. K. Barua and Dr. P. C. Choudhury respectively is raised. K. L. Barua, being a member of Assam Civil Service, was not a trained historian on modern lines and, therefore, the work is not free from certain defects. Some of his findings may not be acceptable to a discerning historian. Being a work devoted to the ancient and the medieval period at the same time it could not analyse all the aspects of the ancient period. Moreover, during the last fifty

years, since the publication of his history (1933), new materials including several inscriptions have come out unearthing fresh facts which practically rendered the work outmoded.

The *Social History of Kamarupa* by Nagendranath Basu, published in three parts (1922, 1926, 1933) has tried to piece together a history of this period from the records and genealogies of several Kayastha families of Kamarupa. The work concentrates mainly on the social history of the ancient and medieval periods without giving due importance to political, administrative and cultural aspects. His eagerness to prove the Bengali origin of the Kayastha families of Assam has also vitiated his approach. He seems to have overlooked the fact that the inscriptions of Bhaskaravarman of the seventh century have referred to the Kayasthas long before the period assigned to Adisura. Moreover, North Bengal of today including some parts of Bangladesh was included in the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa. Therefore, the present political or geographical boundaries cannot be the basis for determining the Bengali or Bihari origin of the existing castes of Assam. In short, we do not get a comprehensive and at same time a scientific treatment of the subject from Basu's otherwise painstaking work. The work pays little attention to the political history and cultural attainments of the period.

The next work deserving our attention is *A Cultural History of Assam*, Part I (1951), by B. K. Barua. It is certainly an improvement upon K. L. Barua's work in as much as it presents in a scientific manner the political as well as the cultural trends in Assam from the earliest to the end of the twelfth century A.D. The writer, however, appears to have laid more emphasis on the cultural aspect than on the political development. But he has not examined and utilised all the available sources to trace the pre-historic development and racial elements of the people and even in the treatment of the historical period, enough room is left for further discussion.

The latest work on the subject, incorporating recently recovered materials, is the *History of the Civilisation of the People of Assam* (to the twelfth century A.D.) by Dr. P. C.

Choudhury, first published in 1958, and made up-to-date in the second edition of 1966. It is a voluminous work of nearly five hundred pages covering the entire gamut of the early civilisation and history of Assam. The author has assiduously collected and collated materials from all the available sources from the pre-historic period, and on the basis of materials duly examined, he has tried to give a comprehensive picture of the land, its people and their onward march through successive centuries to the beginning of the thirteenth century which marks the advent of the Muslims in Assam. He has fruitfully utilised all the source-materials and exploited the inscriptional evidences to the fullest advantage. The dynastic succession of rulers, their administrative system and cultural attainments have been duly brought into focus. He has reinforced his arguments and views with appropriate references to contemporary literary sources and citations from epigraphs of other parts of India. In spite of its comprehensiveness, the work contains certain views and conclusions which may not be easily acceptable to the critical scholars of history.

## VII PROBLEMS OF USING SOURCE-MATERIALS

In the absence of unbiased contemporary historical writings like chronicles of the medieval period the historians of the ancient period had to rely mostly on inferences drawn from materials gleaned from different sources. Even by collating all material evidences based on different sources one does not get a complete and unbroken history of the lines of kings belonging to different dynasties. Inscriptions, no doubt, supply the lists of kings, but details of their rule and achievements are mostly lacking. Contemporary inscriptions of other parts of India or literary references, in a few cases, come to the help of the historians. For instance, the Chinese accounts and *Harsa carita* give a lot of information regarding Bhaskaravarman. These information combined with those of his two inscriptions and three clay seals found in Nalanda appear to be sufficient to present a complete picture of Bhaskaravarman as a king. Other kings are

not so much fortunate as to invite attention of contemporary writers. The local inscriptions are the only repository of their names and achievements. Under the circumstances, the historians had to lean heavily upon the local epigraphs which by themselves are not adequate enough for writing a full-fledged history of the period. Moreover, inscriptions and literary references are mostly silent about the economic and social condition of the period except revealing in fragments glimpses of economic and social condition of the people in general.

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# SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF ASSAM— ANCIENT PERIOD

DR. TARUN C. SHARMA  
(Gauhati University)

## I

THE TERRITORY known as Assam has undergone several cartographic changes during the process of its formation since the Epic period. In the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the northeastern part of India was known as *Pragjyotisha*, a Sanskritised appellation which suggests the first stage of Aryanization of the Brahmaputra valley originally inhabited by non-Aryan Mongoloid groups. The kingdom was established by non-Aryan *Asuras* and *Danabas*, the last one in the line of succession known as *Ghatakasura* was defeated and slain by *Naraka*, a prince of Videha or modern North Bihar. He made *Pragjyotishpur* (the modern Gauhati) the capital of his kingdom and settled many *Brahmans* at the famous shrine at *Kamakhya* on the Nilachal hills in Gauhati. There is a hill near Gauhati which is still known as *Narakasur hill* (Gait, 1967 : 12-13). *Naraka*, who was an Aryan prince from the middle Ganga valley, perhaps assumed the title of *Asur* in consonance with the title of the earlier rulers of *Pragjyotisha*. Not only that in his height of power he started behaving like *Asura*, and Lord Krishna had to slay him in order to restore Aryan rule over the eastern kingdom.

After *Naraka*, his son *Bhagadatta* succeeded to the throne of *Pragjyotisha*. He is frequently mentioned in the *Mahabharata* as a powerful ruler in the east. It is related in *Sabha parvan* that *Arjuna* attacked his kingdom which was defended by *Kiratas* and *Chinas*. In the battle *Bhagadatta* was defeated and was compelled to pay tribute. Later on, in the *Kurukshetra War*, *Bhagadatta*



went with a powerful army to the assistance of Duryodhana. In the war Bhagadatta fell fighting. Vajradatta, who succeeded Bhagadatta in Pragjyotisha, acknowledged the over-lordship of Yudhisthira. Although it is difficult to establish the historicity of the legends, there is, however, no doubt that through the Naraka-sur-Bhagadatta legend one can see how the *Mlechha* kingdom of Northeast India was brought in contact with the ancient civilization of the Ganga valley.

In Puranas and Tantras, the kingdom was known as Kamarupa. At the time of Mahabharata, the kingdom was known to have stretched southwards as far as the Bay of Bengal, the coast of which at that time was much higher up in the north, as most of the areas now we call Bangladesh were under the sea. The western boundary of the kingdom was extended to the bank of the river Kosi. Pragjyotisha, therefore, touched Videha (Mithila) on the west (Barua, 1966 : 2). In the Kalika Puranas and in the Jogini Tantra, Kamakhya was recognised as the centre of Kamarupa and the kingdom was said to extend from the Karatoya river on the west to the river Dikhu near modern town of Sibsagar on the east, and from the mountain of Kanjagiri on the north to the confluence of the Brahmaputra on the south. The kingdom included roughly in addition to the Brahmaputra valley the northeastern districts, namely, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Rongpur and Mymansingh of present Bengal and Bangladesh (Gait, 1967 : 10-11).

The Greek geographer, Ptolemy, who wrote geographical account of India in the middle of the second century A.D., had very hazy ideas about the geography of the regions in the north-eastern corner of India which then comprised Pragjyotisha. He gives numerous names of hills, rivers, places and peoples of this part of India in Greek terms which have not yet been satisfactorily identified with the local names. However, the term *Kirrhadia* used by Ptolemy is now identified with the ancient kingdom inhabited by the Kiratas who were mentioned in the *Mahabharata* as the dwellers of Pragjyotisha. Ptolemy stated that in *Kirrhadia* the best *malabathrum* (*Tezpat*) was produced.

It is known since ancient times (Greek and Roman) that the tree called *malabathrum*, the scented leaves of which were considered as an important item of Indo-Roman trade since the early part of the Christian era, is grown in plenty in northeast India, particularly in the foot-hills of Assam (now Meghalaya) Ranges.

The first epigraphic reference to Kamarupa is in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta (c. 350 A.D.). Here with Samatata, Davaka and Nepala, Kamarupa is mentioned as a *Pratyanta* or frontier state outside the Gupta empire, but evidently in friendly and subordinate relation to it, as the monarchs of these kingdoms fully gratified the imperious commands of Samudragupta by giving all kinds of taxes and obeying his orders (Barua, 1966 : 28).

Yuan Chwang, also written as Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim who visited Kamarupa in about 643 A.D. on invitation of its monarch Kumar Bhaskaravarman, left record of the kingdom, he called *Ka-mo-lu-po*, which is now regarded as the very important and authentic source of the ancient period of Assam history. About two hundred years earlier, the poet Kalidasa mentioned Kamarupa and Pragjyotisha as names of the same kingdom. Kamarupa also figured in the writing of the Arab historian Alberuni in the eleventh century. It is, therefore, clear that since the Epic period down to the eleventh century A.D., the eastern frontier kingdom was known throughout *Aryavarta* both as Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa and the kings of Kamarupa preferred to designate themselves as the Lords of Pragjyotisha down to the twelfth century A.D. When the Muslim kingdom was established in Bengal in the thirteenth century, they found that the country to the east of the Karatoya river was called Kamrud or Kamru. During this period, there occurred a very important event in Assam history. This is the invasion of the Brahmaputra valley by a group of people known as Ahom, whose original home was in the Shan state of Upper Burma on the northern border of Thailand. These Tai-speaking invaders, after consolidating their kingdom in Upper Assam, tried to extend their kingdom westward during the sixteenth and seven-

teenth centuries and found that the portion of Kamarupa kingdom between the Karatoya and the Manas rivers was already conquered by the Moghuls and included in Bengal. Since then, the Ahom kingdom to the east of the Manas river came to be known as *Asam* or *Assam*, after the name of the ruling race, and the name of the ancient kingdom Kamarupa had been restricted to the area lying between the Manas and the Barnadi rivers. During the British period which started from 1826 A.D. most of the hilly tribal areas of northeast India were merged into one state and the entire region lying below the arc of the Eastern Himalaya to the east of Bengal came to be known as Assam.

After independence, most of the hill districts of Assam have been separated as different geo-ethnic states, such as Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, etc., thus restricting the geographical boundary of Assam mainly to the Brahmaputra valley along with the adjoining hilly areas of central Assam and the southern-most district of Cachar in the Barak valley through which Assam touches Bangladesh and Tripura.

We are now restricted by the geo-political division of this region to confine our scope of study within the truncated state of Assam as defined above. Geographically, this area lies on the border of two distinct cultural zones—the Indo-European and the Indo-Chinese. In other words, this frontier state of India forms a land and cultural bridge between the south and southeast Asia. According to Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji (1970 : 16), Assam which is the great reservoir of Kiratas or the Mongoloid races in India and the venue of Indo-Chinese trade since the second century B.C., if not earlier, became a part of Hindu India before the Christian era. He further states that although the king Bhagadatta is purely legendary, he formed a significant symbol and a vehicle in the process of Aryanisation of the Brahmaputra valley and in forging Assam's relation with the Brahmanical world of *Madhyadesa* (the Midland India) round about 1000 B.C.

## II

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

*Prehistoric Period*

The prehistoric period of Assam is still not fully known. This is mainly due to the lack of systematic survey in potential areas of habitation of the Stone Age people. The real obstacle for archaeological investigations in the whole of northeast India is the dense forest which covers the hills and the valleys alike. Unless the forest is cleared and erosion sets in, nothing is observed on the ground surface. As a result, archaeologists in northeast India have to depend upon chances. The chance finds, so far on record, are too inadequate for the reconstruction of the entire prehistoric period of Assam.

So far, we have not been fortunate to collect cultural remains of the Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic period) in Assam. The Old Stone Age is known as the longest period in human history covering about 99.09 percent of the total duration of man on the earth which is now established on the basis of radiometric dating methods as ranging for a period of about three million years during which prehistoric men were hunters, food-gatherers and nomads. The succeeding phase of the Stone Age known as Mesolithic period, which governed the way of life of man in most parts of the world since 10,000 B.C., until man became food-producer round about 7000 B.C., also leaves a blank space in the history of Assam. It is, however, known that in the adjoining hill areas, mainly in the Garo Hills, Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh and in Manipur, there are ample records of habitation of palaeolithic and possibly Mesolithic men (Sankalia, 1974 : 41-43 ; Sharma, 1974a : 63-70 ; Sharma 1974b : 17-19 ; Bopardikar, 1972 : 1-8 ; Singh, 1972 : 1-3). Considering the geographical factors which governed the habitation of Palaeolithic man, one can rightly exclude the flat plains of the Brahmaputra valley, which in the pleistocene epoch (the Age of Palaeolithic man), was far more waterlogged than at present, as areas unsuitable for palaeolithic habitation, but the adjoining hills bordering the plains as well as

the hilly regions in central and southern Assam are certainly ideal areas for habitation of Stone Age hunters and food-gatherers from the point of resources of natural food. It is, therefore, a very absorbing problem of research for future archaeologists to explore the areas thoroughly with the aim of discovering the relics of the Old Stone Age, if there is any.

The next period of prehistory, which is known as the Neolithic or the New Stone Age during which man became food-producers by cultivation of plants and domestication of animals, had its full play throughout the length and breadth of Assam (Barua, 1939 : 6-18). Since the first discovery of Neolithic stone artifacts in 1867 at Jaipur in Upper Assam (Lubbock, 1867 : 822), till the present, sufficient quantities of cultural materials of the Neolithic period have been recovered through chance finds and by organised explorations and excavations in different parts of Assam (Sharma, 1966 : 1-11). The excavated Neolithic sites are (1) Daojali Hading in the North Cachar hills ; and (2) Sarutaru in Kamrup district. The excavation at Daojali Hading is proved to be highly significant for the prehistory of India, because of the fact that in this site for the first time in India, the shouldered celts and quadrangular adzes have been found in stratified contexts in association with corded pottery ware. The discovery of the cultural assemblage has conclusively proved that during the Late Neolithic period (c. 2000 B.C.) Assam and other parts of northeast India came under the influence of Eastern Asiatic Neolithic traditions which are significantly different from the Neolithic traditions of the West (Sharma, 1967 : 126-28). The cultural assemblage unearthed at Sarutaru closely resembles those of Daojali Hading (Rao, 1973 : 1-9).

The cultural material of the Neolithic period of Assam found, so far, consists of stone artifacts and pottery, the tools, weapons and other appliances made of organic material, being easily decayable, have not survived. Nor have there been found animal and plant food remains in the excavations without which it is not possible to reconstruct the economic life of the Neolithic people of Assam. Assam, however, holds great prospect of yielding



evidence of early plant domestication and food production because of wide diversity of plants useful to man and favourable climatic conditions as held by several geographers and botanists (Vavilov, 1949; Sauer, 1952; Harris, 1973). After the discovery of archaeological evidence of early food production or plant manipulation in northwest Thailand (Gorman, 1971) with which Assam shares many common physical and cultural traits, this part of India has assumed greater significance as a strategic area for archaeological research of global interest centered around the problem of nuclear area of food production which was thought to have taken place only on the highlands of western Asia. We have clear evidence from the wet tropical monsoon belt of Thailand that this climatic zone gave rise to the 'Neolithic Revolution' earlier than that of western Asia (10,000 B.C. in southeast Asia as against 7000 B.C. in western Asia). The geographical area covering Assam, Meghalaya and other states of northeast India, comes under the southeast Asian climatic and vegetative zones due to which several archaeologists, botanists and geographers have turned their attention to Assam as an area which might have played crucial role in human history in transforming man-the-hunter to man-the-food-producer. This is, therefore, a very interesting problem for future archaeological research in Assam.

### *Megalithic Remains*

The term 'megalith' is generally applied to structures built usually with large and rough stones. This particular kind of monuments and burial structures has a worldwide distribution. Their origin is rooted to prehistoric period—3rd millennium B.C. in the Mediterranean countries and 1st millennium B.C. in South India.

Regarding the Megalithic culture of Assam, J. P. Mills writes, "An archaeological characteristic of Assam of worldwide fame is its wealth of megaliths. Indeed, it is one of the few places of the world where monuments of this type are still erected" (Mills, 1933 : 3-6). It is a very interesting phenomenon for anthropologists and cultural historians that megalithism has persisted since prehistoric times till the present among some hill tribes of Assam.



In Assam, megaliths are found in Karbi Anglong and in the North Cachar hills. The megalithic types met in Karbi Anglong (former Mikir hills) are mainly menhirs or erect stone monuments and dolmen or table-stones. In the North Cachar hills megalithic structures are found at Bolasan, Kobak, Debora, Kartong and Nunglo. The menhirs of North Cachar hills are of a different type. They have the shape of a truncated cone with a flat base which is circular. They usually rise to a height of 2 to 2.30 metres and have shallow cavities. The menhirs at Kartong are flat on one side and round on the other, resembling a cricket bat. These are decorated with carved animal figures, such as elephants, deer, frog, fish, mithun, etc. (Mills and Hutton, 1929 : 185-200). It must, however, be admitted that the study of megalithism as an archaeological problem is yet to start in Assam. Their chronological status is still unknown.

### *Historic Period*

The historic period of Assam is known to have begun with the establishment of the Varman dynasty in c. 380 A.D.—Pushyavarman being the first king of this dynasty. In Indian history, the ancient period is recognised as a cultural phase falling within the time range between 600 B.C. and 300 A.D. As there is no recorded evidence of Buddhist, Mauryan and Sunga influence in Assam, this period of Kamarupa kingdom falls strictly with the protohistoric period or more precisely within the legendary history. Under this peculiar situation, the ancient historic period in Assam may be pushed up in the time scale from 380 A.D. to 650 A.D., i.e., the period covered by the Varman dynasty which included roughly the Gupta period of Indian history.

The sources of ancient history of Assam or precisely ancient Kamarupa are very limited among which the Copper Plate Grants found at Nidhanpur and Doobi provide epigraphic records and the genealogy of the Varman dynasty. The seal inscriptions of Bhaskaravarman (c. 643 A.D.) found at Nalanda is also considered as an important piece of evidence of Assam history. Another authentic evidence regarding ancient Kamarupa is

provided by the *Si-yu-ki* of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Yuan Chwang who visited Kamarupa during the reign of Kumar Bhaskaravarman.

Among the sculptural and architectural remains of this period there are only a few, the most important among which are the typical Gupta type of sculpture and architecture found at Dah Parbatia near Tezpur (ancient Haruppeswara) where Gupta-type stone pillars have also been found (Barua, 1966 : 96-116). There is so much dearth of material of the ancient period of Assam that in the history of Assam written by Sir Edward Gait, he could devote only fifteen pages to cover the period of Assam history from the fourth to the twelfth century A.D. Although Assam abounds in ruins and ancient habitation places, none of them have so far been systematically explored, excavated and studied. As for example, the site now occupied by the city of Gauhati is known to be very rich in the ruins of the ancient civilization of Kamarupa. Although Dr. T. Bloch (1906-07 : 17-28) of the Archaeological Survey of India, pointed out as early as 1906 that "the modern civil stations of Gauhati and Tezpur seem to occupy the sites of two of the oldest and most important among the early Aryan settlements in Assam called Pragjyotishpura and Haruppeswara", nobody paid any attention to it. As a result, some of the most important evidences of the history of Assam have been destroyed and permanently buried under the modern structures. By this act of our negligence, we have lost for ever the scope of identifying and discovering the ancient city of Pragjyotishpura about which we speak so much with pride and glory, without knowing anything about the art, architecture and richness of the ancient city. The massive and extensive defence fortifications built around the ancient city for its protection from invasion by enemies prove beyond doubt that this was a capital city of ancient Kamarupa known as Pragjyotishpura. Further, the presence of the shrines of Kamakhya and Navagraha and the place called Narakasur hill within the fortification, adds further confirmatory evidence to our claim. The capital city defence fortifications, which were standing during the British rule around Gauhati bearing the glories of our past, however, could not withstand the onslaught of the educated urban elites who have built palatial residential houses

with the permission of our National Government by destroying these national ancient monuments. About this we can only comment very lamentably that a nation, which is not conscious about its own history and historical records, is a lost nation. In the face of this there is nothing for us but to admit that during the short span of our independence, we have lost our national values and morals. Similar is the case with ancient capital city of Harappeswara which is now being completely buried under the modern structures of Tezpur town. It must be noted that Harappeswara and its environs in which the ruins of Bamuni hill and Dah Parbatia are located, have given us some marvellous pieces of the Gupta art, but the ancient ruins have not yet been properly surveyed, excavated and studied.

There is another group of very interesting and important ancient ruins in the Kopili valley of central Assam. This group of ruins, called Davaka ruins, named after a modern place name, are scattered over an extensive area at Gosai Juri, Akasi Ganga, Gach Tal and Mikir Ali. K. L. Barua has mentioned that "the Kopili valley, which is still called Davaka, may be identified with the kingdom of Davaka mentioned in the Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta" along with the kingdom of Kamarupa (Barua, 1966 : 31). What is more significant about the Davaka kingdom is that in the year 428 A.D. an embassy was sent to China by an Indian king who was lord of the Ko-pi-li country according to Chinese records. Historians like Vincent Smith and Lt. Col. Wilson have identified Ko-pi-li with the Kopili river of Assam. The embassy may, therefore, have been sent by the king of Davaka whose name was Chandra-Vallabha called *Yue-ai* (moon-loved) by the Chinese.

We have already mentioned that the Brahmaputra valley lies on an ancient trade route. Commenting on the Indo-Chinese relations during the ancient period, Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji (1970 : 31) wrote that since very ancient times, Assam formed the reservoir of Kirata, the people of the Mongoloid stock and the land served as the "highway (before the routes through central Asia and Northwestern India was discovered and used by the Chinese) for material trade and sometimes arts and crafts and

even ideas to pass between China and India”.

*The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, a Greek account of the first century A.D. on the navigation in the Arabian Sea and on the trade by sea between India and Egypt and the Roman world, gives indications of the trade carried by the *Kirata* linking up India with Tibet and China with which the Mongoloid tribesmen of northeast India were familiar. This volume of trade was carried on between northeast India and southwest China for centuries, even though the Indian and Chinese authorities had no official or formal knowledge of the trade. The Greek explorers and geographers knew about it from South India and Egypt that this trade was in commodities like *malabathrum* from the Himalayan regions and in raw silk yarn and silk cloth from *Thinai* or China. It is, however, known from the records left by the Chinese political officer, Chang K'ien of the second century B.C. that there was a trade route from Assam to southwest China, officially not known to the Chinese Government, through which Chinese goods like silk cloth and bamboo flutes came to India from where these were exported to the western world. Professor Chatterji also mentions that Indian notions and ideas and possibly Indian folklores penetrated into China, probably as early as the fourth century B.C. through Assam and northern Burma. Further, Indian Kshatriya adventurers were going to Burma and Khmer country in the first century B.C. through Assam.

In this ancient Indo-China trade, the river ports in the Brahmaputra valley, namely, Pragjyotishpura (modern Gauhati), Haruppeswara (modern Tezpur) and Davaka in the Kopili valley must have played key roles. The archaeology of these three places, if properly studied, would no doubt open up a new horizon in the history of Assam and India.

### III

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT AMBARI

An attempt was made in this direction at a locality called Ambari situated within the heart of the city of Gauhati during

1969-71 by the writer in collaboration with Dr. M. K. Dhavalikar and Dr. Z. D. Ansari of the Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, Poona, under the directorship of Professor M. C. Goswami of Gauhati University during 1969-71. The site, located on the south bank of the Brahmaputra adjoining a large ancient tank called Dighalipukhuri was actually a chance find. It was acquired from the Reserve Bank of India which planned to build their massive bank building on it. While digging the foundation trench of the bank building, a large number of sculptures and huge quantities of ancient bricks and pottery were exposed. Considering the archaeological richness of the site, the writer planned to excavate the site methodically for which necessary help was sought from all the concerned authorities.

The excavations (Sharma, 1968-69 : 3-4 ; Ansari and Dhavalikar, 1971 : 79-87) reveal that there is only about 2 meters of ancient occupational deposit above the subsoil water level below which there lies about 2.5 meters of thick habitational debris. The site, which is found to have been deserted after eighteenth century A.D., has preserved cultural materials of at least two historic periods above the subsoil water level, viz., *Period I* dated from seventh to thirteenth century A.D. which, in Assam history, is called Pre-Ahom period ; and *Period II* dated from thirteenth to eighteenth century A.D. which falls within the Ahom period of Assam history, below which there lie cultural materials of earlier periods going back to the beginning of the Christian era. The C-14 date of the stratum (3) of period I is  $1030 \pm 150$  A.D.

Period I (seventh to thirteenth century A.D.) is characterised by a peculiar type of pottery made of kaolin or Chinese clay, a number of sculptures of Brahmanical deities, several architectural ruins. The use of kaolin clay for the manufacture of pottery vessels is not common in other parts of India. The selection of kaolin, which is a very fine variety of clay formed as a result of decomposition of granite rock under buried condition, suggests that this cultural tradition might have reached the Brahmaputra valley from China where this type of clay was very commonly used for making pottery vessels and terracotta art objects. Because of the distinctive character of the dominant ceramic traditions at



Ambari, this type of pottery is christened as 'Ambari ware'. Explorations at a number of historically important sites in and around Gauhati and in Tezpur revealed that kaolin pottery was present in all the sites. Further, kaolin pottery has been reported from Davaka in Nowgong district and from the excavated site at Bhismaknagar in Arunachal Pradesh. On the basis of its wide distribution in the Brahmaputra valley, it can justifiably be claimed that the 'Ambari ware' forms a distinctive cultural item of the ancient civilization of the Brahmaputra valley.

The 'Ambari ware' is of a very fine fabric and it is baked at a uniformly high temperature. The vessels are devoid of any slip or wash. The main shapes include globular jars with flaring rim and short neck, flat based goblets, sharp rimmed cups, spouted vessels, carinated bowls with basketry designs, dish-on-stand and horn-shaped vessels. The vessels are usually decorated with stamped designs, such as sun, lozenge rosettes, mango, etc., on the shoulder and the rim. Besides the 'Ambari ware', the ceramic industry at Ambari includes a grey ware and a red ware of fine fabric.

The excavation also yielded a few terracotta figurines which belong to period I. Among them, the finest specimen is a torso of a female modelled in the round. The figure is that of an *apsara* (nymph) having voluptuous breasts and attenuated waist with sensuous curves of the body. According to experts, the female torso called *Ambari U'rhasi* is the finest specimen of its class in the entire range of Indian art (Davabkar, 1973 : 143). Another curious terracotta object is a *mukha-linga*. Besides, there are a number of miniature *Siva-lingas*, birds, and a plaque depicting *Ganesha*. The excavation also yielded a number of terracotta balls, beads, bangles, and sealings. All these objects are made of kaolin clay.

The Ambari ruins show that the reign of Bhaskaravarman was truly the golden Age of Kamarupa. This is amply testified by the records left by Yuan Chwang, who visited Kamarupa during the reign of Bhaskaravarman. Yuan Chwang stated,

"The country was low and moist; the crops were regular... there were continuous tanks to the town; the climate was genial. The people were of honest ways, small of



stature, ... they worshipped the Devas and did not believe in Buddhism. So there had never been a Buddhist monastery in the land. .... the Deva temples were some hundreds in numbers. .... The ruling king, who was a brahmin by caste, .... was named Bhaskaravarman. His Majesty was a lover of learning, and his subjects followed his examples."

Period II (thirteenth to eighteenth century A.D.). This cultural period in the Ambari excavation coincides with the Ahom period of Assam, but more precisely we may call it the Ahom-Moghul period. This period is characterised by the Muslim glazed ware.

It is very interesting to note that the excavations at Ambari yielded the characteristic Chinese calendon ware. The presence of this pottery at Gauhati proves beyond doubt that there were regular trade routes from China to India through the Brahmaputra valley and the river port at Gauhati (ancient Pragjyotishpura) played a very significant role as a transit port.

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## ***Medieval Period***

### PERSIAN SOURCES OF MEDIEVAL ASSAM

DR. JAGADISH NARAYAN SARKAR  
(Jadavpur University)

#### I

THE MEDIEVAL history of Assam may be said to begin from the migration of the Ahoms, a tribe of the Shans or Tais early in the thirteenth century and their conquest of the country (1228). The materials for studying it lie scattered not only in the various records of her own rulers and people but also in those of the subsequent Muslim invaders of the land, as well as in the accounts of its foreign visitors. Hence the primary sources of information of medieval Assam from the thirteenth century onwards may broadly be classified under the following heads.

A. The Assamese Chronicles or Assamese Historical Literature, including (a) Ahom and the Assamese *Buranjis*, (b) *Buranjis* of other countries, and (c) *Buranjis* dealing with regional chronicles, *Vamsavalis*, etc. ;

B. Contemporary chronicles, memoirs and *farmans* in Persian ;

C. Archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic sources, Assamese or Muslim ;

D. Accounts of foreign travellers of different nationalities ;

E. Contemporary literature.

Now let us discuss the contemporary chronicles, memoirs, *farmans*, etc., in Persian.

Since many Muhammadan rulers, the Delhi or Bengal sultans

and the Mughal emperors or their governors and generals, endeavoured to extend their eastern frontiers at the expense of the Assamese peoples in Kamrup and Assam, we have to study the contemporary chronicles in Persian in order to reconstruct the history of medieval Assam. These chronicles supply not only the details of political or military history, but also important facts of physical and economic geography of Assam and her social and cultural history. These also occasionally help in fixing the chronology of the rulers of Kamrup and Assam.

### (a) *Turko-Afghan Period*

1. *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* : There are only three important contemporary sources on our subject during the Turko-Afghan period, of which the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* is the most important. The accounts of the first three Muhammadan invasions of Assam are available in *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* (1260-1). The author, Minhaj uddin us Siraj, a judge, rarely indulges in high flown eulogy but narrates his facts in a plain, straightforward manner, which induces confidence in the sincerity of his statements and accuracy of knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

The other two, though contemporary, are not of much help for our purpose.

2. *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* : by Zia uddin Barani.<sup>2</sup>

3. *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* or *Gulshan-i-Ibrahimi* : by Muhammad Qasim.<sup>3</sup>

### (b) *Mughal Period*

This period is illumined by a larger number of sources than the Sultanate period.

1. *Akbarnamah* : Assam's contact with the Mughals began during the time of Akbar. Hence we have primarily to consult the official and non-official histories of his reign. The *Akbarnamah* of Shaikh Abul Fazl, the first Royal Historiographer of Akbar, throws light on the beginnings of an aggressive Mughal N.E. frontier policy--the establishment of a defensive alliance with Koch Bihar, the break-up of the Koch Kingdom, the events of

the Koch-Mughal war, especially the imprisonment of Raja Parikshit and Mukarram Khan's expedition to Assam. Abul Fazl is an indispensable source notwithstanding his well known defects,—verbosity and flattery.<sup>4</sup>

2. *Am-i-Akbari*: It is the concluding part of the *Akbarnamah*.<sup>5</sup> The Account of Twelve Subahs refers to hostilities between Parikshit and Lakshmi Narayan and to the Hajo expedition of Mukarram Khan.

3. *Muntakhab-ul-Tawarikh*: Its author, Abdul Qadir of Badaun or Badauni, was an orthodox Sunni and so a hostile critic of Akbar's religious syncretism. He describes the city of Lakhnauti, and discusses political relations of Bengal Sultans with the Mughals, with some light on contact between Assam and the Mughals in a subjective way.<sup>6</sup>

4. *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* by Khwaja Nizamuddin Ahmad *Bakhshi* is a non-controversial work, as the author is a matter-of-fact writer who did not take sides.<sup>7</sup>

5. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, the autobiography of Emperor Jahangir, refers cursorily to the hostility between Lakshmi Narayan, king of Koch Bihar, and Parikshit Narayan, king of Kamrup (Koch Hajo), leading to the Ahom Mughal conflict during the last quarter of the sixteenth century and the conquest of the latter.<sup>8</sup>

6. *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* by Alauddin Ispahana *alias* Mirza Nathan, *Ghaibi*, later entitled Shitab Khan by Jahangir, is primarily a memoir and only secondarily a history. The work revolves round the author and his father and is a part of their careers. The author's father, Iltimam Khan, was Mir Bahr of the flotilla of Bengal under its governor Islam Khan. Nathan himself was an important officer in Mughal Kamrup (1612-25) and hence an eye witness and active participant in contemporary political affairs. But all political and military details are incidental to the careers of the son and the father. It is a voluminous work in four chapters respectively dealing with the history of Bengal and Orissa under three viceroys of Islam Khan, Qasim Khan and Ibrahim Khan and the *interregnum* of rebellion of Prince

Khurram (1605-25). Hence "no period of the history of medieval Bengal is now known even in half such fulness and accuracy of detail as the reign of Jahangir" (Sarkar). Written from the standpoint of a Mughal imperialist commander, the work helps us in understanding the main trends of Mughal policy towards Koch Bihar and Kamrup, the first Mughal province in the north-eastern frontier. The Mughals turned Koch Bihar into a tributary vassal and conquered its rebel part, Kamrup. But their failure in Assam led to a policy of pacific defence. It throws light on the conflict of Mukarram Khan, Abu Baker, Sattrant and Nathan with the Ahoms, and on "the long and endless wars of the Mughal empire with the Mongoloid kingdom on its eastern border".

The work is important not only for the new light thrown on the N.E. Frontier policy of the Mughals and their relations with the Koches and the Assamese, but also for filling up gaps of information in the internal history of Koch Bihar and Kamrup. It contains sketches of the careers of kings Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit Narayan and a detailed account of Kamrup under the Mughals, followed by occasional reference to Kamrup affairs and side lights on administrative, military and social history. The *Burani*s and Persian chronicles corroborate the work in general. As such it is indispensable for studying the history of north-eastern India during the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

7. *Padshahnamah*. After the reign of Jahangir there is no single comprehensive contemporary Persian source, comparable to *Baharistan* for the history of Kamrup and Assam. During the reign of Shahjahan there were several official and non-official histories no doubt. But the only contemporary Mughal source on these two Mongoloid states in the north-east frontier of India was the *Padshahnamah* by Abdul Hamid Lahori, the official history of the first two decades of Shahjahan's reign. But even this is hardly as helpful for this purpose as the *Baharistan*. Lahori hints at the domestic conflict between Lakshmi Narayan of Koch Bihar and Parikshit Narayan of Koch Hajo during the Bengal viceroyalty of Islam Khan (1609) and refers to the imprisonment of Parikshit by the Mughals and their mutual



hostility (ii. 64-5). But such references hardly mean much and Bhattacharyya is right when he says that the *Padishahnamah* is "practically silent on Kuch Bihar". Nevertheless, this alone, among Persian sources, now illumines Mughal-Ahom policy (ii. 46-90) tracing Islam Khan's aggressive imperialism towards Kamrup. The account of its conquest and Mughal administration there, though brief, has the merit of corroboration by Ahom sources. Again no other Persian chronicle throws light on the prolonged hostility of Bali Narayan towards Kamrup and the Mughals, or describes the military expeditions of Mukarram Khan, Abu Bakr, Abdus Salam, Allah Yar Khan and Zainul Abidin so graphically.

It differs from some other chronicles on certain points. The Ahom-Mughal showdown at Dhubri lasted not  $3\frac{1}{2}$  months as in *Baharistan* (i. 236) but only one month according to the *Padishahnamah* (ii. 65). It also gives a smaller figure (ii. 66) for the army of Parikshit and his son-in-law at Dhubri than *Baharistan* (1156).

8. *Alamgirnamah* by Mirza Muhammad Kazim is the official history of the first decade of Aurangzeb's reign.<sup>11</sup> Its references to previous periods are incidental and brief, viz., the defeat of the Assamese by Alauddin Husain Shah of Bengal in 1497, the inclusion of Gauhati within the Mughal kingdom, and the Assam campaign of Islam Khan, Jahangir's viceroy in Bengal. Its account of Mir Jumla's aggressive imperialism in Koch Bihar and Assam (1661-3)—its genesis and progress, along with the antecedent circumstances, the details of the war, the initial difficulties faced, the triumphal march, the conclusion of peace, and finally his tragic death and the revulsions suffered thereafter,—are contemporary, authentic, and vivid. For the subsequent period the author just makes a bare mention of only one event, the Assamese recapture of Gauhati in December, 1667. The account of military history is supplemented by a valuable account of the geography and socio-economic conditions of these two frontier states.<sup>12</sup> It must, however, be stated that the entire account of the campaign and of the country is redundant after a perusal of the diary of Shihabuddin Talish, the newsreporter accompanying

Mir Jumla, as this is really the first-hand authority of the events. Above all, the *Alamgirnamah* is a courtly panegyric depending on official reports only and hence its account is one-sided.<sup>13</sup>

9. *Fatuhāt-i-Alamgiri* by Ishwardas, a Nagar Brahman of Patan in Gujrat, whose governor was the son of Mir Jumla, completed in 1730, is an account of Aurangzeb's reign till thirty-fourth year. It is valuable for giving the *farman* of Aurangzeb appointing him Governor of Bengal (48a-50b). Here he was charged with the effective chastisement of the rather refractory zamindars of the province and also in particular the rulers of Assam and of the Maghs, who were said to have ill-treated the Muslims.<sup>14</sup>

10. *Zafarnama-i-Alamgiri*, also known as *Aurangnama*, *Waqiat* or *Halat i Alamgiri* by Mirza Askari (Aqil Khan Razi). He was Governor of Delhi at the time of his death, 1108 A.H. Though it is a history of the first five years of Aurangzeb's reign, its treatment of the Assam war is very brief, referring only to some defensive preparation of the Assamese and a few events.<sup>15</sup>

11. *Fathiyyah-i-Ibriyyah*, also known as *Tarikh-i-Mulk-i-Asham* or *Tarikh-i-Asam* by Ibn Muhammad Wali Ahmad, better known as Shihabuddin Talish, the *waqianavis* (news reporter) of Mir Jumla, is the story of the latter's conquest of Koch Bihar and of Assam till his death (March 1663)<sup>16</sup> and return of the victorious army. The first title is highly significant, as it hints at the hardships attending the General's "victories with a warning". The second and third titles practically mean one and the same thing, the history of the country of 'Asham' or history of 'Asam'. As Talish accompanied the Mir his account is that of an eye-witness and admittedly the most authentic one from the Mughal standpoint. Compiled in Shawwal, 1073 (May, 1663) within two months of the Mir's death (31 March, 1663), it is a wholly contemporary account of great value. It is significant that the Mir was actuated, as we know from his reporter, not only by imperialistic designs and retribution but also by a desire for "a holy war" with the Assamese and "an ardent passion" for releasing Muslim war prisoners, rooting out idolatry and spreading Islam. The description of the inception, the progress and the

victorious march, the tragic end and the retreat of the army is throughout vivid. The treatment is more systematic and more detailed than the official history. In fact, the similarities and coincidences, verbal and material, between the two make the latter source superfluous.<sup>17</sup>

12. *The Continuation of Fathiyyah by Talish*: The *Fathiyyah* ends with the death of Mir Jumla. At once we begin to feel the absence of a source like it. So for the next two decades 1663-82, which witnessed the final discomfiture of Mughal aggression in Assam, we have to look elsewhere,—the *Continuation*, the *Alamgirnamah*, the unsatisfactory account of Khafi Khan, the imperial court-bulletins, Aurangzeb's *farmans* to Ram Singh and the *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*. But none is comprehensive by itself. These will be taken up one by one.

Talish's *Continuation of Fathiyyah*, primarily a history of Bengal from the death of Mir Jumla (1663) to the conquest of Chatgaon by Shaista Khan (27 January 1665), gives some details of Mughal-Koch relations during this period.<sup>18</sup>

13. *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab* by Muhammad Hashim, better known as Khafi Khan, is not of much value for our purpose. The account of the Assam war is detailed of course, but as it is based on careless use of earlier chronicles, including the *Alamgirnamah*, it has no independent value. Moreover, the author has made confused and unauthorised remarks.<sup>19</sup>

14. *Akhbarat-i-darbar-i-mua'la*: News letters of the imperial court, from r.y. 2 of the reign of Aurangzeb.<sup>20</sup> These are useful for Ram Singh's Assam campaign, especially yrs. 10, 12, 33.

15. *Five farmans of Aurangzeb*<sup>21</sup> to Ram Singh, Mughal general, constitute an important source of the Mughal-Ahom conflict in 1667 during the post-Mir Jumla period.

16. *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* by Muhammad Sagi Mustaid Khan, the official history of Aurangzeb's entire reign written from state papers after his death during the reign of Muhammad Shah, contains a mere summary of the *Alamgirnamah* for the first decade.<sup>22</sup> So it has no independent value for our purpose. Moreover, it is a highly condensed work. Nevertheless it is of value

as it is the only contemporary Persian source re : the post-Mir Jumla period of about two decades (1663-1682), characterised by futile Mughal campaigns against a resuscitated Ahom power and marking the grand climacteric of Mughal imperialism in Assam.

17. *Maasir-ul-Umara* : Besides the contemporary works there are a few later works in Persian which are of some value. The *Maasir-ul-Umara* by Mir Abdur Razzaq, Nawab Samsam uddaulah Shah Nawaz Khan Khwafi Aurangabadi and his son Abdul Hayy (2nd edn.) (c. 1741-80), is a biographical dictionary of the peers of the Mughal empire (1500-c. 1780), full of valuable historical details. For our purpose the notices of Islam Khan, Governor of Bengal, 1636-39, Mir Jumla, Ram Singh and Shaista Khan deserve special attention.<sup>23</sup>

18. *Riyaz-us-Salatin* by Munshi Ghulam Hussain Salim, written about 1787-88, is the sole history of Bengal and Bihar during Muslim rule.<sup>24</sup> It is practically a modern work, based not only on a limited number of sources but inadequate use of materials available there and its chronology is defective (Stewart). It refers to the first three Muslim invasions of Kamrup, gives an outline of the activities of the Mughal viceroys in Bengal with regard to Assam, and indicates the effects of the war of succession among Shahjahan's sons on the north-eastern frontier policy of the Mughals. It needs thorough scrutiny.

19. *Risalat us-Shuhada* by Pir Muhammad Shattari, compiled in 1663, has been classed among pious legends (Sarkar).<sup>25</sup>

## II

Having examined the nature of the Persian source materials and their classification as well as the extent of their dependability we now pass on to discuss the extent to which these have been utilised by historians and the fields which remain to be covered.

The earliest historian to utilise the Persian sources for our purpose was Major Charles Stewart, whose *History of Bengal* published in 1813,<sup>26</sup> was the "first attempt" to write in English a connected history of Bengal during the Muslim period. It is

based principally on contemporary Persian histories, the *Riyaz-us-Salatin* and Portuguese and other available European accounts. He alludes to the Koch ruler Lakshmi Narayan's acceptance of Mughal sovereignty. But his reference to the Assam campaigns of Islam Khan and Mir Jumla is brief and needs careful checking with original Persian sources and the *Buranjis*.

Blochmann dealt with the three Mongoloid states of medieval Assam,—Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo and Assam—and the Muhammadan invasions of these countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, on the basis of the materials supplied by the *Akbarnamah*, the *Padshahnamah* and the *Fathiyyah-i-Ibriyyah*.<sup>27</sup> This was an independent study of the relations of these countries with the Mughals. The late S. N. Bhattacharyya opined that Blochmann failed to emphasize "the underlying unity and continuity of policy of the Mughal Government towards the north-east frontier kingdoms". His quotations from these standard Persian works were isolated, the extracts were not always accurate and complete and he was guilty of both sins of commission and omission. Thus he has not referred to the revolt of Raghu Deb against his cousin Lakshmi Narayan, and to the help which Isa Khan, the Afghan chief of "Bhati", rendered to the former and its sequel, as described in detail by Abul Fazl.<sup>28</sup> Again, Blochmann's translation of two passages on Koch king Narayan's relation with Akbar and the rebellion of Patkunwar is not very accurate. Even the name of Koch king Mal Gosain has been written as Bal Gosain. It must, however, be noted that Blochmann's essay is admittedly based on one class of evidence, namely, the Mughal historians. So Bhattacharyya's criticism of it as being completely one-sided is somewhat unfair. The real defect of the article lies in the incomplete and defective translation of the Persian sources.<sup>29</sup>

E. A. Gait (later Sir), then S.D.O., Mangaldai in Darrang district, did not consult the available Persian chronicles in his monograph entitled *The Koch Kings of Kamarupa*,<sup>30</sup> which was the earliest attempt to write a connected and authentic history of the kingdoms of Koch Bihar and Kamrup with special reference to their relation with the Muslims. But Gait is undoubtedly "the father of historical research in Assam". His *Report on the Prog-*



*ress of Historical Research in Assam* (1897) is a solid monument of his industry, energy and perseverance in exploring all possible sources, indigenous to Assam,—the *Buranjis*, coins, inscriptions, etc. Thereafter he made a comparative use of these and the Persian chronicles and other materials. The result was that his *History of Assam* (1906/1926) was the first comprehensive and systematic history on scientific lines. Its account of the Ahom-Muslim conflicts till the end of Mughal period is detailed and authentic.

But this pioneer work on the comprehensive history of Assam from the earliest times suffers from certain defects. Instead of utilising the original Persian sources he depended on the faulty abstracts of Blochmann. He was, again, unaware of the valuable data supplied by Mirza Nathan on Koch kings Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit Narayan and the consequent error came to be perpetuated by other scholars who followed him. It is, however, difficult to agree with Bhattacharyya's criticism that Gait did not do 'full justice even to Mir Jumla's Koch and Assam wars, that he missed "their proper perspective as the climacteric of the north-east frontier policy" of the Mughals and that he did not emphasize the 'far reaching' effects of the wars on the later history of Assam including Ahom-Mughal relations.<sup>31</sup> Gait, of course, revised his first edition of 1906 in 1926 on the basis of some new facts derived from Jadunath's translation of *Fathiyyah* and *Baharistan*.<sup>32</sup> But his utilisation of Persian sources cannot be said to be full or exhaustive in any case.

In his monumental *History of Aurangzib*,<sup>33</sup> Jadunath Sarkar (later Sir) did not think it worthwhile to use Persian sources for the pre-Mir-Jumla period of Mughal relations with Koch Bihar and Assam and so depended on Gait for a brief review thereof. But he has considerably improved upon Gait by making an independent and synthetic study of the chief *Buranjis* and the contemporary, extant Persian sources for Mir Jumla's wars and their sequel. Bhattacharyya<sup>34</sup> finds fault with Sarkar that he has not "emphasized the full significance of his (Mir's) wars in all their bearings" and that his account of the Ahom-Mughal relations during the post-Mir Jumla period of twenty years is "somewhat



sketchy". Further, he has not utilised the *Buranji* materials fully. These charges against Sarkar are true in one sense. The invasions of Ram Singh and other Mughal generals down to 1682 all ended in fiasco. But much of Bhattacharyya's criticism of Sarkar, as in the case of Gait, is somewhat wide of the mark. For Sarkar treated the facts from the standpoints of the history of Aurangzeb as a whole and not from the details of frontier policy and Bhattacharyya himself admits that the scope of Sarkar's work is limited.

It is to the credit of S. N. Bhattacharyya<sup>35</sup> that he is the first writer to have made a full use of the Persian chronicles and the *Buranji* materials as known in his time (1929) and other classes of sources, literary, archaeological, numismatic and epigraphic.

With his life-long devotion to the cause of Assam's literature and history, his first-hand knowledge of the original manuscripts and records of Assam, Suryya Kumar Bhuyan occupies the same place in modern historiography of Assam as Jadunath Sarkar occupies in Indian historiography. His fame rests on his exploration of fresh indigenous sources of Assam and editing and translation of *Buranjis*.<sup>36</sup> Though his use of Persian sources is limited as he has depended on translations, no other writer in recent times has contributed more to the reconstruction of the history of Assam than Bhuyan.

The writer of this paper is the latest to deal with the history of medieval Assam in a special monograph on the conqueror of Assam (1662), based on a synthetic and critical use of different classes of sources,—Persian, Ahom and Assamese, Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu, accounts of foreign travellers and European factory records.<sup>37</sup> The number of Persian sources referred to here exceeds those utilized by Gait, Sarkar and Bhattacharyya.

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As regards the fields of the Persian sources on Assam which still remain to be covered, it may be stated generally that these sources have so far mainly been used for purposes of political

and military history. But unfortunately these have not been adequately utilised for throwing light on administrative, military organisation and hardly at all for socio-economic history. From the thirteenth century down to the eighteenth century the Muslim conquerors of the land, in part or entirety, known differently in different times, Kamrup, Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo, Assam, introduced their own administrative and military institutions in the conquered areas, making occasional adjustments with the existing systems. The Persian sources referred to these occasionally. Again, glimpses of such changes are also available at times in the indigenous sources. But the attention of scholars has not yet been sufficiently drawn to the importance of studying either the administrative or the military organisation in the land during these five centuries.<sup>38</sup>

Persian sources are usually found to be deficient in materials for socio-economic history. But sometimes these throw incidental light on it. Sometimes, however, we can collect materials of considerable importance for socio-economic history even in Persian chronicles. The *Fathiyyah-i-Ibriyyah* of Mir Jumla's reporter, Shihabuddin Talish, gives very interesting details as an eye-witness about socio-economic conditions as he found in the lands traversed by his master, whom he accompanied. These were long ago translated by Sir Jadunath Sarkar. These have been utilised by S. K. Bhuyan and Bhattacharyya. Passages from the *Alamgirnamah*, bearing on the same subject, were also translated even before by Vansittart. The preparation of a critical monograph on socio-economic conditions in Assam as a whole or parts thereof, based on a synthetic study of all classes of sources, may thus be attempted.<sup>39</sup>

### III

The use of the Persian source material is not free from difficulty or problem. In fact, in the present state of academic life in some of our universities there is a fear-complex which keeps away many young researchers from learning it. Apart from the language difficulty of the students the number of competent

research guides in this field is fast dwindling in several universities. Even the teaching of medieval India in some universities at the postgraduate stage leaves much to be desired. Either there is no qualified teacher to teach the subject or the subject is not taught at all. How is it to be expected that the teachers or products of such universities will ever encourage research in a subject requiring the use of Persian sources? If such a state continues even the agonising gasps of a dying subject will be hushed for ever.

One of the problems which a scholar actually dealing with the Persian materials on medieval Assam has to face is that the evidence supplied by these is at variance with non-Persian sources, e.g., Assamese or Koch sources. Such conflicting evidence may naturally arise due to different views of a king or minister held by the writers on the opposite camps. Thus the Koch, Assam and Persian chronicles are at variance on the showdown between Bengal and Koch Bihar under Nara Narayan. The local chronicles are prone to eulogise their rulers and underrate their enemies. But differences might also arise about the extent of the hold of the Bengal Sultans on the conquered country. While the Persian chronicles would magnify it, the *Buranjis* would testify to the resistance of the Bhuyans, probably helped by the Ahoms leading to the destruction of the Muslim army, especially after the abortive Assam campaign of Alauddin Hussain Shah. Sometimes dates given by the Persian sources do not tally with those by the non-Persian ones.

A more pertinent problem is the absence of any reference in Persian chronicles to some events mentioned in Ahom or Assamese sources or coins. To take a few illustrations only. No contemporary or near-contemporary Persian (and also Ahom or Assamese) chronicle refers to any invasion of Assam proper earlier than fifteenth century by any Muhammadan power. The first and the only reference to a Muslim invasion of Assam is made in the *Alamgirnarah* and it is very cryptic.<sup>40</sup>

Coins and inscriptions describe Alauddin Hussain Shah as "the conqueror of Kamrup and Kamta". Though there are popular traditions, there is hardly any contemporary or even

near-contemporary literary evidence. In Persian both the *Alamgirnamah* and the *Fathiyyah* belong to Aurangzeb's reign and mention the Sultan's expedition to Assam only and never to Kamrup. (Similarly no Ahom and Assamese *Buranjis* refer to it). Only a late eighteenth century Bengal history, the *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, mentions the Kamrup campaign. Again, there is no contemporary Persian chronicle on Alauddin Husain Shah's invasion of Assam, though it is mentioned in the standard *Buranjis* like the *Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* and the *Purani Assam Buranji*. The only Persian source to refer to it is the 200 year late *Alamgirnamah*.

Another notable instance of the inexplicable silence of the Persian sources on events and personalities figuring prominently in Ahom and Assam *Buranjis* is with regard to the invasions of a Muslim commander, called Turubak or Turbak. His identity is practically unknown. While the *Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai* is silent about it, that found in the family of Sukumar Mahanta describes him as a kinsman of the 'Gaura chief', i.e., the Sultan of Bengal, who selected him as the commander of his army to Assam. If so, it is really surprising that no Persian chronicle mentions him or throws any light on his expedition, which has to be placed not *after* but *during* the reign of Nusrat Shah (1525-32).

There are similar problems dealing with the Mughal period as well. But space prevents me from dilating on these. What has been stated will give a fair idea of the problems which a scholar will have to face in using the Persian source material for the history of Assam.

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- <sup>2</sup> Persian Text. Bib. Ind. ; Eng. Tr. in *JASB*, 1869. Extracts only in E. & D., iii.

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- <sup>5</sup> Text and Tr. both Bib. Ind. ; Eng. Tr. vol. I, Blochmann, revd. by Phillot ; ii and iii, Jarrett, revd. by Jadunath Sarkar, 1949, 1948.
- <sup>6</sup> Pers. Text, Bib. Ind., Eng. Tr. by Ranking, Lowe and Haig in 3 vols. Extracts in E & D, V. For criticism, see Mujeeb, on Badaoni, in *Historians of Medieval India*, 1968, pp. 106-12 ; Jagadish N. Sarkar, *History-Writing*, ch. IV.
- <sup>7</sup> Text. Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow ; Eng. Tr. by B. De, Bib. Ind., Reprint ; Extr. trans. E & D, V.
- <sup>8</sup> Ed. by Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1863-4) and Eng. Tr. by Rogers and Beveridge, 2 vols., Reprint. Extracts tr. E & D, vi. Col. Price's edition is not regarded as authentic now. Bhattacharya, xvi-xvii.
- <sup>9</sup> The world of scholarship owes the discovery of the work to Sir Jadunath Sarkar (in 1919) who found that the description of the relevant Pers. Ms. in Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, was wrong. The work is also called *Tawarikh-i-Bangalah*. A photostat copy is in Sarkar Collection, National Library, No. 60. Sarkar described it with full table of contents in *JBORS*, vii (1921-22), pp. 1-8. Beveridge contributed a disparaging note (in *JIH*, Jan., 1924) re : its historical value, to which Sarkar gave a suitable reply in a later issue. See Sarkar, *Hist. of Bengal*, ii. (ed.), Preface and Bibliography. The Dacca University had a rotograph copy of the Ms., which was utilised by S. N. Bhattacharyya for his *History of Mughal N.E.F. Policy* (see vii-ix, 406). The English translation of the work by Dr. M. I. Borah, 2 vols. (pub. *DHAS*, 1936), is not always accurate. See Q. Ahmad's art. in *Historians of Medieval India* (1968), p. 69.
- <sup>10</sup> Pers. Text, Bib. Ind. (1867-68), 2 vols. Extracts trans. in E & D, vii. Blochmann's abstract in *JASB*, 1872, pp. 53-62, is not very reliable. See Bhattacharya, xvii.
- <sup>11</sup> Pers. Text Bib. Ind. (1865-73) ; Extracts Trans. in E & D, vii.
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- <sup>13</sup> Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, article in *Medieval Historians of India*, ed. by M. H. Khan, 1968, p. 186 ; also *History of History-Writing*, ch. iv.
- <sup>14</sup> I consulted Sir J. N. Sarkar's transcript of Br. Mus. Addl. No. 23884.



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- <sup>15</sup> ASB. Ms. Curzon Colln. no 698. See Ethe. I.O. No. 346, 347 ; Eng. Tr. by Khan Bahadur Maulvi Haji Zafar Hasan, Aligarh Hist. Inst. Pub. 1946 with an English summary.
  - <sup>16</sup> I have used the Asiatic Society Ms. (D. 72). Talish is the name of a district north of Gilan. The first part entitled *Tarikh-i-Asam* was printed at Calcutta, 1948. Same as *Ajiba-i-Gharibah*, Ethe. I.O. 341-3. Value of the work discussed by Sir J. N. Sarkar, *JBORS*, i. 179-81 ; *ibid.*, pt. ii. 182-95 for a description of Assam, and its people about 1600, based on three Mss. See also *BPP*, XXIX (1925), p. 7 ; abstract by H. Blochmann, *JASB*, 1872, pp. 63-96, in two pts. and 17 sections, 6th describing Assam and its people, 1662. This was not very dependable but many have used it.
  - <sup>17</sup> Fl. 7-8. 18-19. *Hadiqat us Safa* by Yusuf Ali bin Ghulam Ali Khan, deals with the Assam war of Mir Jumla. Eng. Tr. in *Calcutta Quarterly Journal*, June, 1825.
  - <sup>18</sup> Sachau and Ethe. no. 240. I used Sir J. N. Sarkar's transcript of Bodleian Ms. 589, now in National Library Sarkar Collection. Value discussed in his *Studies in Mughal India* with trans. of 4 sections of the work and also in *JASB*, 1906, 1907 and *Studies in Aurangzeb's Reign*. My translation of some passages in *Pr. I.H.C.*, 1948.
  - <sup>19</sup> Pers. Text, ed. by Maulavi Kabiruddin Ahmad, Bib. Ind. (1869), 2 vols. Extr. trans. in E & D, viii. A modern writer (Sri Ram Sharma) accuses Khafi Khan of plagiarism (*Bib. of Mugh. India*). Another (Md. Umar) describes the work as jumble of facts without co-ordination and coherence (*Historians of Medieval India*, 1968, p. 158).
  - <sup>20</sup> These are now available in Royal Asiatic Society, London ; Jaipur State Archives collection now in Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner ; Sarkar Collection, National Library, and Maharajkumar Raghubir Singh Library, Sitamau.
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- 28 *Akbarnamah*, Tr. Beveridge, iii, 1081-2, 1093-4.
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- 33 In 5 vols., Calcutta, 1912-24. Assam is discussed in vol. iii.
- 34 Bhattacharyya, vi.
- 35 *A History of Mughal North-Eastern Frontier Policy*, Calcutta, 1929. Sir Jadunath Sarkar has paid a fittingly high compliment to his work. *History of Bengal* (ed.), ii, p. ix.
- 36 See his *Studies in History of Assam*, Gauhati, 1965.
- 37 *The Life of Mir Jumla, General of Aurangzeb*, 1st edn., Calcutta, 1951 ; 2nd edn., Delhi, 1979.
- 38 Several years ago I examined a Ph.D. thesis of Dr. A. C. Barua, Gauhati University, on the administrative system of the Ahoms. But this has not been published. My idea in making the above suggestion is somewhat different. Similarly I suggested to some aspiring research scholars of Assam the need of studying the military organisation in Assam. But I do not know if any work is being done on the subject.
- 39 A few years ago Dr. J. N. Phukan, now Reader in Gauhati University, obtained his doctorate on a study of economic life in Assam. I do not know if the thesis has been published.
- 40 The event, according to Gait, occurred in A.D. 1337. But on the evidence of coins, found at Enayetpur, Mymensingh district, it is to be assigned to 733-34/1332-33. See Bhattacharyya, 61-2 and n.

# SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF ASSAM IN AHOM LANGUAGE

DR. J. N. PHUKAN  
(*Gauhati University*)

## I

OF THE large amount of source material available in several languages on the history of Assam relating to the medieval period, more particularly the period from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries, those in Ahom language constitute a sizable portion. Ahom was the language of the Tai, or the Shan conquerors of the Brahmaputra valley in the thirteenth century, whose descendants of the present day no longer speak it. However, it remains the language of their priests for conducting all the traditional rites and ceremonies, such as Phra-long, Om-pha, Sai-pha, Me-dam Me-phi, Chak-long, etc., which they continue to perform even today. In this respect, Ahom language is not altogether a dead language.

Linguistically, Ahom is a Tai language of the Sino-Tai family of languages.<sup>1</sup> Languages of the Tai group are spoken by the Tai people of Burma, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and the Peoples' Republic of China.<sup>2</sup> In north-eastern India, the Aitons, Khamtis, Khamyangs, Phakes and Turungs speak Tai languages. Word analysis shows that the Ahom language possesses all the basic characteristics of Tai, such as monosyllabism, tonality, invariable character of words, extensive use of classifiers, abundance of couplets, etc.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand it is an older form of Tai, and as such contains very few foreign words.

The Ahoms, who called themselves 'Tai' in their language, came to the Brahmaputra valley early in the thirteenth century A.D. and in the next few centuries they brought the whole valley

under their control. The kingdom they built up came to be known as Assam over which they held their sway till the coming of the Burmese in 1820, followed by the British in 1824. The Treaty of Yandaboo which was concluded without any representative of the Ahom rulers and, perhaps, without their knowledge too, between the representatives of the Burmese monarch and the English East India Company on 24 February, 1826, marks the termination of the Ahom rule in Assam.

The Ahoms possessed a high sense of history.<sup>4</sup> They possessed a script of their own long before their advent to the Brahmaputra valley and, like their kinsmen elsewhere in South-East Asia, recorded contemporary events relating to their political, economic, social, and cultural life. The chronicles which they compiled incorporating historical events relating to their rule are known as *buranji*. They also possessed a considerable amount of religious literature dealing with various aspects of their religion.

The system of recording all important events that took place during the reign of each king had been carefully maintained even in their new habitat where such a system was not known to the local people.<sup>5</sup> Evidently, all the contemporary events relating to the advent of the Ahoms and their rule in the Brahmaputra valley, more particularly of their early period, were recorded in Ahom language by Ahom scholar-scribes.

The practice of keeping records and compiling *buranji* in Assamese language began to appear probably towards the beginning of the seventeenth century<sup>6</sup> when Assamese was adopted as an additional court language by the Ahom rulers. Slowly the practice was picked up by other people and found expression in the form of *ramsavalis* and *buranjis* in Assamese language.<sup>7</sup> Today, therefore, indigenous historical literature of the Ahom period is available in two languages—Ahom and Assamese. But it is important to note that all the chronicles in Assamese language containing accounts of the early period of the Ahom rule are but translations of contemporary Ahom records and not original compilations. It is in this respect that records and documents in Ahom language relating to the early period of Ahom rule are

more important than those in Assamese. Hence the written source material in Ahom language is indispensable for any correct reconstruction of the history of Assam of the medieval period.

## II

According to subject matter, the source material in Ahom language may be classified under the following heads :

1. historical accounts called *buranji* ;
2. inscriptions on stones and pillars ;
3. coins and coin-legends ;
4. land-grant and man-grant documents ;
5. treatises on religious subjects, and
6. treatises on non-religious subjects.

1. The term *buranji* is applied to several types of historical writings.<sup>8</sup> First of all are the chronicles containing accounts of all important events which took place during the reign of each successive Ahom monarch. Here the events were recorded in strict chronological order. Secondly are the concised chronicles containing only the name, the dates of accession and death, and the total reign period of each king. Thirdly are the chronicles containing the name, the dates of accession and death of each king, the names of ministers and chief officials with their family origins. Fourthly are the very shorter chronicles containing the names of the kings and their sons. It appears that the last three categories were shorter or summary editions of larger and detailed chronicles and were prepared much later for ready reference. All these types of chronicles are also known as *din buranji* or chronicles of kings on earth (*din* means earth). There is another type of *buranji* called *deo buranji*, or chronicles dealing with gods, called *deo*. Since this type of *buranji* contains accounts of gods, they do not come under historical accounts for our purpose.

Sheets of bark of the *aloe* tree (*aquilaria agallocha*), locally called the *saci* tree, processed and cut into convenient sizes were used for writing the chronicles.<sup>9</sup> A few chronicles were written

on long sheets of cloth of *endi* or *muga*.

2. Inscriptions on stones and pillars generally bear royal proclamations on the demarcation of boundaries, construction of public works, building of roads, embankments and raising of defensive walls or ramparts. Inscriptions of this type were fixed at such places which were often frequented by people so as to remind them of the great deeds of the kings or to desist them from violating the conditions inscribed in the royal proclamations.

3. The coins of the Ahom kings bearing legends in Ahom language constitute an important source material. Each coin contains in its legends the Ahom name of the king, the Ahom year of his accession to the throne and the name of his titular Ahom deity.

4. Permanent documents chiefly in the form of copper-plates had been issued by the Ahom ruler while making grants of land and man to temples, *satras*, preachers, priests and to other persons. Since most of the grants were made in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when Assamese language had increasingly been used for keeping records and compiling accounts, many such documents were recorded in Assamese and Sanskrit languages. But some documents were still recorded in Ahom language only, and some in Ahom on the one side and Sanskrit and Assamese on the other.

The documents recorded in Ahom language do not contain any eulogy of the kings, or salutations to gods, but bare facts only. This is not the case with documents recorded in Assamese and Sanskrit. Besides, the documents in Ahom language contain a lot of information on many aspects not noticed in documents recorded in other languages.

5. Religious literature in Ahom language deals with various subjects, such as the Ahom legend of creation, legends of gods, and of deities (*pha*), procedures for the worship of their ancestors, rules governing the worship of *phi* (spirit), different types of calculation and divination, procedures for offering sacrifices, interpretation of omens, procedures for the worship of *Chum-seng*, the performance of *Om-pha*, the disposal of the dead, and many other aspects of their religion. Such works are not found in any other language. Hence they constitute the only



written source material for any understanding of the religion and religious life of the Ahoms. Most of the works are written on sheets of bark of *aloe* tree, but a few are found on cloth or incised on sheets of bamboo.

6. Non-religious works are those which contain such subjects as genealogies of the Ahom families, the Ahom calender of year called *lak-ni*, dictionaries, stories, or works dealing with technical subjects. These are mostly written on *saci* bark.

### III

Barring the inscriptions on stones and pillars, the number of which is very much limited, the extent of source material in all other categories is considerable. Endowed with the historical tradition in a high degree, the Ahoms considered the knowledge of their past history and the exploits of their kings and ancestors a part of their education and culture. Very often it was imparted orally to children and youths.<sup>10</sup> The recital of *buranji* was a necessary part of an Ahom marriage, and a monarch always consulted *buranji* before appointing an officer to acquaint himself with latter's ancestry. Hence a large number of *buranjis* were produced during the Ahom period. No doubt, many such *buranjis* had been lost due to flood, fire or other natural events or due to political turmoils like the Moamaria uprising or the Burmese invasions, but many are still in existence and some, however, in a very bad state of preservation.

It is to be noted that all *buranjis* do not contain complete accounts of the Ahoms. This is because *buranjis* were compiled by different scribes employed by the kings. After the death of a king or a scribe, the compilation of *buranjis* in some cases was discontinued. Hence, many existing *buranjis* are incomplete accounts.

Sir Edward Gait, one of the pioneers in the field of historical research in Assam, made enquiries into the existence of *buranjis* in the possession of old families of Assam. In the introduction to the first edition of his *History of Assam* (1905) he gives a list of six chief *buranjis* in Ahom language. They cover



the following periods :

1. from the earliest times to the end of the Ahom rule.
2. from the earliest times to Mir Jumla's invasion in 1663 A.D.
3. from the earliest times to 1681 A.D.
4. from the earliest times to 1764 A.D.
5. from the earliest times to 1681 A.D.
6. from the earliest times to 1810 A.D.

He also got them translated into Assamese but it is not known as to what happened to these translations nor is it possible to trace the original ones today. Till now I have examined ten *buranjis* in the collection of Ahom manuscripts in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies of the Government of Assam.<sup>11</sup> Among these is a photo-copy of a manuscript *buranji* originally obtained from London in 1926.<sup>12</sup> The following is the list of *buranjis* in the said Department :

1. A summary of history from Khun-lung Khun-lai to Su-hit-pung-pha.
2. An account of Khun-lung Khun-lai.
3. A *buranji* from Su-tan-pha to Su-hit-pung-pha.
4. A short *buranji* from Khun-lung Khun-lai to Su-rem-pha.
5. A list of kings from Su-ka-pha to Su-rem-pha with their dates of accession and death, and periods of reign.
6. Similar to no. 5.
7. A *buranji* from Su-tan-pha to Chandrakantasimha.
8. A *buranji* from the earliest times to Su-nyeu-pha excluding the reigns of Su-khrung-pha, Su-tan-pha, Su-nen-pha and part of Su-rem-pha.
9. A photo-copy *buranji* from the earliest times to Su-tan-pha.
10. A *buranji* from Su-pat-pha to Su-tan-pha.

During my inquiry of Ahom manuscripts in several areas of Sibsagar district where the Ahom priestly families are mainly concentrated, I came across several *buranjis*. They are :

1. from Su-pat-pha (1680-96) to Su-nyeu-pha (1769-80).<sup>13</sup>
2. from the earliest times to the reign of Chandrakantasimha (1810-18).<sup>14</sup>

3. the reign of Su-pat-pha (1680-96).<sup>15</sup>
4. the reign of Su-khrung-pha (1696-1714).<sup>16</sup>
5. from Su-ka-pha to Su-hit-pung-mong (1780-95).<sup>17</sup>

From my experience in this field, I am convinced that a sizable number of manuscript *buranjis* are now lying in the possession of the Ahom priestly families unnoticed and unreported. When these are brought to light they will surely constitute a long list. Excepting one, the *Ahom-Buranji* published in 1930, all other *buranjis* are in manuscript forms.

Till now only one inscription on stone pillar has been recovered. It was found at some distance from Sadiya town sometimes in 1920-21, and in 1953 it was removed to the Assam State Museum at Gauhati. The pillar is octagonal in shape tapering towards the top but entwined by the figure of a snake whose hood rests on the top of the pillar. All the eight sides of the pillar as well as the body of the snake are inscribed vertically from the top to the bottom. A report with a summary translation of the inscription made by Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Barua was published in the *Annual Report* of the Archaeological Survey of India for 1924-25 by K. N. Dikshit, the then Superintendent of Eastern Circle. In Barua's rendering no date or the name of the king in whose reign the pillar was installed is found. The inscription has been ascribed to the sixteenth century.<sup>18</sup> Two other pillars with inscriptions are reported. Of these one is lying in the midst of deep forest on the bank of an old tank a few kilometres to the north-east of Chapakhowa town in Sadiya area. This pillar is said to be similar to the snake pillar just mentioned. The other pillar is located on the bank of the Nong-yang lake in the Tirap district of Arunachal. The existence of this pillar had been reported by the British officials in the early nineteenth century. An English officer is said to have noticed this inscription in 1828.<sup>19</sup> S. E. Peal, a British tea planter of Nazira, Sib-sagar, tried to locate the pillar in 1879.<sup>20</sup> According to *Assam Buranji* by Kasinath Tamuli Phukan, first published in 1844, the pillar (or rather two pillars) cut out of stone with inscriptions in Ahom language was raised during the reign of Su-dang-pha in

1401 A.D. The inscription relates to a treaty that ended the war between the Ahoms and the army of Su-run-pha, the king of Mogaung.<sup>21</sup> These inscriptions, when discovered and deciphered, will definitely throw more light on unknown or less known facts of the history of medieval Assam.

The gold and silver coins bearing legends in Ahom language are described and illustrated in the *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum*, Vol. I, by V. A. Smith, 1909; *Catalogue of Provincial Cabinet of Coins, Eastern Bengal and Assam*, 1911; *Catalogue of the Provincial Coin Cabinet of Assam* by A. W. Bothan, 1930; and *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Provincial Coins, Assam*, 1919. The Indian Museum, the Asiatic Society and the Assam State Museum possess in their collection a number of such coins. A coin of Su-pat-pha (1680-96) is in possession of Dr. Padmeswar Gogoi of Gauhati,<sup>22</sup> and a few coins in the possession of Sri Bhuvan Chandra Handique of Joysagar, Sibsagar. Recently a coin of Su-nyeu-pha (A.D. 1769-80) has been noticed in the possession of Sri B. R. Dutta of Namrup. Barring the coins ascribed to Su-klen-mong (1539-52), first reported by E. A. Gait from a reading of the legends,<sup>23</sup> all other coins belong to the period from the reign of Su-pung-mong (A.D. 1663-69) to that of Su-nyeu-pha (A.D. 1769-80).

About twenty copper-plate documents have been reported from different places. They are mostly records of grant of land and man, and a few records of appointment of officers, and settlement of disputes relating to land. They cover the period from Su-pat-pha (1680-96) to Chandrakantasimha (1810-18). The following copper-plate charters bearing inscriptions in Ahom language (either on one side or both sides) have been examined or reported :

1. Grant of some ornaments to a Brahmin by Su-pat-pha in lak-ni Kat-keo.<sup>24</sup>
2. Appointment of a Brahmin family for the worship of idol of Sadasiva by Su-khrung-pha in lak-ni Dap-Mao (*Saka* 1622).<sup>25</sup>
3. Grant of land and man to a Brahmin by Su-tan-pha in

- lak-ni Kat-Sau. The grant was made earlier by his father Su-khrung-pha in lak-ni Tao-chau.<sup>26</sup>
4. Charter of Su-tan-pha issued in lak-ni Kap-san.<sup>27</sup>
  5. Grant of land and man to a few Brahmins for serving guests and drawing water from two tanks by Su-rem-pha in lak-ni Ka-plao (*Saka* 1680).<sup>28</sup>
  6. Grant of land and man to a Brahmin family for appointing its members as priests at Biswanath by Su-rem-pha in lak-ni Kap-ngi (*Saka* 1681).<sup>29</sup>
  7. Grant of land and man to a Brahmin by Su-rem-pha in *Saka* 1686.<sup>30</sup>
  8. Charter issued by Su-rem-pha in lak-ni Plek-si-nga (*Saka* 1686).<sup>31</sup>
  9. Charter issued by Su-rem-pha in lak-ni Tao-mit.<sup>32</sup>
  10. Grant of land and man to a Brahmin for appointing him *Thakur* at Biswanath by Su-ngeu-pha in lak-ni Dap-mao (*Saka* 1696).<sup>33</sup>
  11. Grant of land in Majuli for the worship of four idols of the Kamalabari Satra by Su-ngeu-pha in lak-ni Tao-san.<sup>34</sup>
  12. Grant of land and man to Bengena-ati Satra by Su-ngeu-pha in *Saka* 1699.<sup>35</sup>
  13. Grant of land and man to Sivachandra of the Difaloo Satra by Su-hit-pong-pha in lai-ni Khut-si.<sup>36</sup>
  14. Grant of land and man for the worship of the idol of god at Namti by Su-hit-pong-pha in lak-ni Rung-sao.<sup>37</sup>
  15. Grant of land and man for appointing one Balaram as *Barkataki* by Su-hit-pong-pha in lak-ni Rai-mit (*Saka* 1714).<sup>38</sup>
  16. Document issued in the reign of Kamalesvarasimha settling dispute relating to the land of Bardowa Satra in *Saka* 1721.<sup>39</sup>
  17. Re-issue of grant of land and man in the reign of Kamalesvarasimha in *Saka* 1727.<sup>40</sup>
  18. Grant issued by Chandrakantasimha in lak-ni Plek-san.<sup>41</sup>

The Ahom religious literature includes works on various subjects. Among these the following may be mentioned :

*Lai-tu* : contains the Ahom tradition of the great flood and the creation.<sup>42</sup>

*Lai-ko-mung* : contains the origin of the sun, the moon, stars, air, fire, water, men, animals, plants, etc.

*Phra-lung* : contains the story of I'hra.

*Khek Phu-ra* : contains the procedure for the worship of Phura.

*U-rak Pha Phu-ra* : contains the story of Phu-ra born as a swan.

*Um-pha Niu-ru* : contains the procedures for the worship of gods.

*Khek Chum-Pha* : contains the procedures for the worship of the idol of Chum-pha (the titular deity of the Ahom royal family).

*Khek-lai* : contains the procedure for the worship of Su-mong-ngeu, Khen-thao-ngeu Lang-kuri, Cha-man and other gods.

*Khek Phi La-ka* : contains the procedures for the worship of Phi La-ka.

*Khek Kham-mong* : contains the procedures for the worship of Khun-mong or the Lord of the kingdom for long life.

*Khek Luk-pha* : contains rules for the worship of Leng-don.

*Khek Khao-kham* : contains procedures for the worship of Khao-kham.

*Khek Phi* : contains procedures for the worship of *phi*, such as *phi khun-mak*, *phi khun-u-mong*, and other *phis*.

*Lit Nu-tin-kai* : book of divination with fowl thigh-bone.

*Phe-ban* : calculation of auspicious day.

*Lit Chu-ra* : interpretation of dreams.

The Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies possesses a number of such works, and many more are lying in the possession of Ahom priestly families.<sup>43</sup> Unlike other works, the religious works are found in verse form. They also contain many obsolete words and phrases.

Non-religious works consist of the genealogies of different Ahom families, rules for the calculation of the Ahom calendar, stories of animals, techniques for training wild elephants, etc.

There are also a few dictionaries called *amra* giving Ahom words with their Assamese equivalents in Ahom script.

#### IV

The inscriptions on stones, copper-plates and coins are the most authentic and dependable source material. So far as the *buranjis* are concerned, they are the accounts of contemporary events written down from time to time. The narratives generally follow the reign of each king, hence they are always in chronological order. The *buranjis* were compiled by scribes who were well-versed in the language and belonged to the three Ahom priestly clans—Mo-sam, Mo-hung and Mo-plong (also called Deodhai, Mohon and Bailung). It was these three clans whose members were associated, since very early times, with the performance of all religious rites and ceremonies, public and private. They were also entrusted by the monarchs with the keeping of records of all contemporary events, and thus enabling their successive generations to acquire a sort of historical culture. This trust they faithfully kept and events were narrated as they happened or reported to them, without any exaggeration or comments of their own. *Buranjis* are, therefore, the faithful presentation of bare facts, and comments and exaggerations of all sorts, very often noticed in chronicles written in Assamese, are conspicuously absent. The accounts in the *buranjis* fully agree with those left by the Mughal writers who came to Assam during the Mughal wars.

The religious works, however, contain a lot of legends, beliefs, customs and traditions that have come down from very early times. They also contain stories of gods and spirits. Hence every care is to be taken before using them as source material in writing history. But the fact is that they constitute the only written source material for the social and religious life of the Ahoms.



## V

Before examining the extent of utilisation of the above source material by historians, it is relevant to examine, first of all, the amount of such source material made available to the historians who do not have access to the originals. Of the *buranjis*, only one *buranji* under the title *Ahom Buranji* was translated into English by Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Barua with the help of five Ahom *Pandits* and was published as early as 1930. As noted earlier, the pillar inscription discovered near Sadiya was deciphered by Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Barua and its English summary was published by K. N. Dikshit in the *Annual Report* for 1924-25 in the Archaeological Survey of India. The coins described by A. W. Botham, V. A. Smith, R. Friel and E. A. Gait have been deciphered by Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Barua, but coins acquired by the Assam State Museum in recent years have not been catalogued and published.<sup>41</sup> Of the inscriptions only three, as indicated elsewhere, have been translated and published.

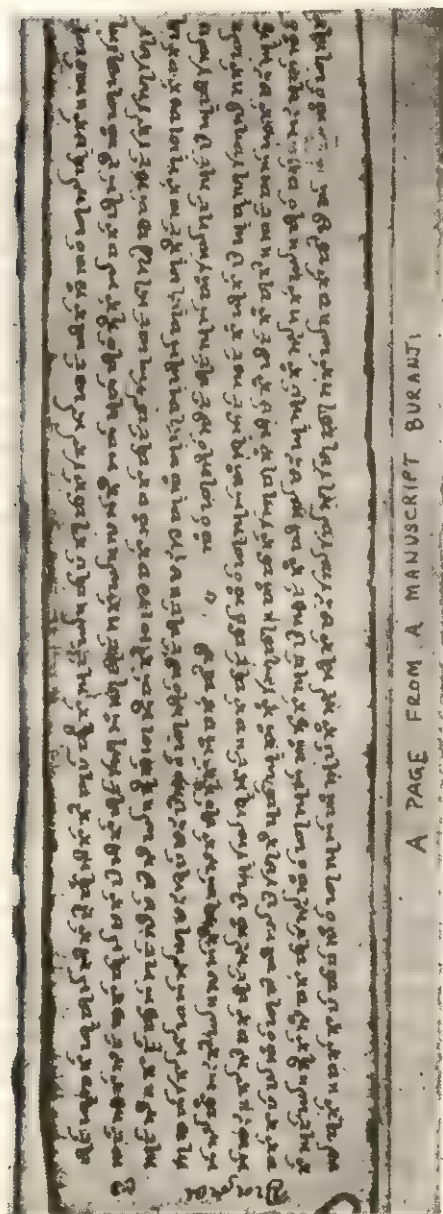
Among the religious works only one work called *Lai-tu* containing the legend of the creation was translated and published in 1901. The Tai Historical and Cultural Society of Assam has published a small booklet on Ahom marriage ceremony called *Chak-long*, the contents of which have been drawn from old manuscripts.<sup>42</sup> An *Ahom Lexicon* based on some manuscript dictionaries was compiled by Nandanath Deodhai Phukan and Bimalakanta Barua and was published by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in 1964. All this shows that only an insignificant portion of source material in Ahom language has so far been published and made available to scholars. It is, therefore, no wonder that most of the modern works on different periods and various aspects of the history of Assam of the Ahom period are not based on source material in Ahom.

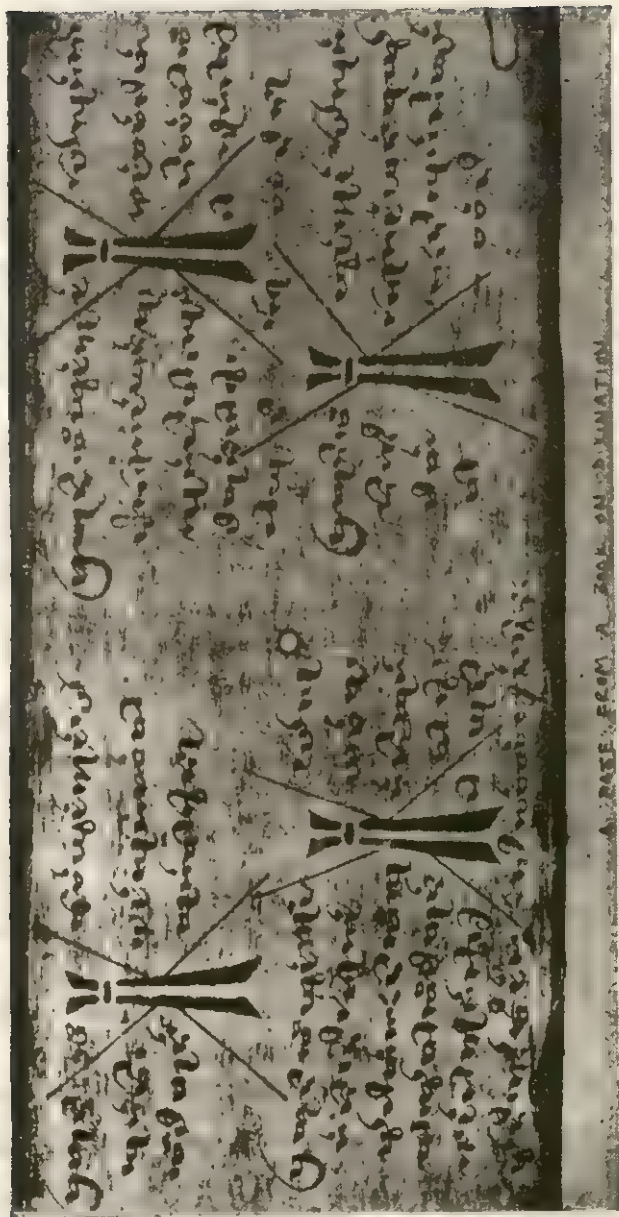
In view of this extremely limited scope available to historians to draw information from the source material in Ahom language, an attempt at assessment on the utilisation of such source material by them sounds rather discourteous. And it must be admitted that there is no lack of sincerity on their part to utilize the source material available with them. On a closer review what can be

said of them is that they appear to be very particular in drawing information relating to political events but pay less attention to information relating to other aspects. A few instances may be cited. The *Ahom-Buranji* (1930, pp. 25 and 34) clearly states that Su-ka-pha, the first Ahom king, was accompanied by a large number of families. Yet some scholars hold the view, even without referring to this *Buranji*, that the Ahoms did not bring any woman with them.<sup>46</sup> Again, original descriptions of the Ahom coronation ceremony are found in pages 130, 144, 243, 250, 278-79, and 336 of the same *Buranji*, which very much disagree with the one given by Francis Hamilton,<sup>47</sup> who prepared his accounts during 1807-9 without visiting Assam or going through the information in the *Buranjis*. But it is surprising to note that while giving accounts of Ahom coronation, modern scholars<sup>48</sup> have been following Hamilton without even examining the descriptions in *Ahom-Buranji*. Further, in the coins of Rajesvarasimha bearing legends in Sanskrit, the king pays his homage to the feet of 'Hara Gauri', but in coins bearing legends in Ahom language he pays homage to god 'Leng-don'. Yet the second aspect is not taken into consideration when historians discuss the religious convictions of this monarch. These few instances only indicate that sufficient attention has yet to be paid to religious, social and other information as supplied by the source material in Ahom language.

## VI

The greatest problem lies in the non-availability of the source material in Ahom to scholars. It is, therefore, of the highest importance that the source material be made available to them in original with their translation. For this purpose, scholars versed in Ahom language are to be pooled together, and, if necessary, the collaboration of scholars in Tai languages from abroad may be arranged. Such a venture is possible on the part of the Dibrugarh and Gauhati Universities with sufficient funds made available to them by the Government.





A PAGE FROM A BOOK ON ORINATION

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- <sup>2</sup> For Tai languages : Shafer, Robert (ed.), *Bibliography of the Sino-Tibetan Languages*, 1957 ; Simmonds, E. H. S. (ed.), *Bibliographies of Mon-Khmer and Tai Linguistic*, 1963. For 'Tai peoples : Seidenfaden, Major Erik, *The Thai Peoples*, Bangkok, 1967.
- <sup>3</sup> Phukan, J. N., 'Basic Aspects of the Tai (Ahom) Language', *The Journal of the University of Gauhati*, Vol. XV, no. 1, 1964, pp. 73-81 ; 'The Tai-Ahom Language' in *Lik Phan Tai*, the *Journal of the Tai Historical and Cultural Society of Assam*, Vol. I, 1966, pp. 1-22.
- <sup>4</sup> Gait, E. A., *A History of Assam*, 1926, Introduction to the first edition, X.
- <sup>5</sup> The instructions issued by Su-ka-pha, the first Ahom king, to scribes to write down all particulars are indicative of the great importance attached to recording events.
- <sup>6</sup> "The system of compiling *Buranjis* in the Assamese language came into vogue most probably either towards the end of the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century." (Devi, Lakshmi, *Ahom-Tribal Relations*, 1968, p. 14).
- <sup>7</sup> The word *buranji*, properly *bu-ran-ji*, according to some writers, means (*bu*—ignorant, *ran*—to teach, *ji*—store) 'store-house that teaches the ignorant'.
- <sup>8</sup> In common parlance, the term *buranji* is applied to all documents whether historical or otherwise.
- <sup>9</sup> A description of the preparation of sheets of bark before writing is given by E. A. Gait in *A History of Assam*, Appendix-D, second edition, 1926.
- <sup>10</sup> Bhuyan, S. K. (ed.), *Assam Buranji*, second edition, 1960, Introduction, XII.
- <sup>11</sup> The writer is currently engaged in preparing a catalogue of Tai manuscripts in the collection of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies.
- <sup>12</sup> No details of the original manuscript are available.
- <sup>13</sup> In the possession of Sri Dambarudhar Phukan of Bakota. Examined in 1962.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, examined in 1962 and 1968.
- <sup>15</sup> In the possession of Sri Biseswar Phukan of Amguri. Examined in 1963.
- <sup>16</sup> In the possession of Sri Jonaram Phukan of Karanga. Examined in 1963.
- <sup>17</sup> In the possession of Sri Dambarudhar Phukan. Examined in 1968.
- <sup>18</sup> Curiously enough in the notice attached to the pillar by the State



Museum authority, the pillar inscription is assigned to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

- <sup>19</sup> Jaduram Barua's letter of 29th August, 1831, published on 15 October, 1831, in *Samachar Darpan*, p. 314, as published in Appendix of *Assam Buranji* (in Bengali) of Haliram Dhekial Phukan, edited by Jatindramohan Bhattacharyya, Gauhati, Bengali year 1369.
- <sup>20</sup> His visit to that area near the Patkai was published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XIVIII, Pt. II, 1879.
- <sup>21</sup> Phukan, K. T., *Assam Buranji*, second edition, 1906, p. 16.
- <sup>22</sup> A photo of this coin is given in his *Tai-Ahom Religion and Customs*, Gauhati, 1976, Appendix A, No. 8.
- <sup>23</sup> 'Notes on some Ahom Coins', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1895, No. 4, pp. 286-89.
- <sup>24</sup> A photograph of the transcript on a piece of silk cloth was supplied to the writer by Principal Sadananda Chaliha of Biswanath College, Chariali, sometime in 1972. The transcript is said to have been made by Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Barua.
- <sup>25</sup> This plate is now in the Sibsagar College Library, Joysagar. The Sanskrit and Assamese side of the plate is given in *Prachya-Sasanavali*, compiled and edited by Maheswar Neog, Gauhati, 1974, plate no. 109.
- <sup>26</sup> In possession of Sri Mahendra Bhattacharyya of Jamuguri, Darrang. A reading of the plate was published by the writer of this article in *Epigraphia Indica*, XXXVIII, Pt. II, October 1969, pp. 178-82.
- <sup>27</sup> A photograph copy of the plate was obtained by courtesy of Sri Nava-kumar Buragohain of Golaghat. The inscriptions in Sanskrit and Assamese are given in *Prachya-Sasanavali* by M. Neog, plate no. 30.
- <sup>28</sup> This plate is now in the Sibsagar College Library, Joysagar.
- <sup>29</sup> This plate was found by the late Sarbananda Rajkumar in the possession of Chandra Kanta Barua of Tezpur. A reading of the plate was published by him in the *Manideep*, an Assamese magazine.
- <sup>30</sup> The inscriptions in Sanskrit and Assamese of this plate are given in *Prachya-Sasanavali* by M. Neog, plate no. 73.
- <sup>31</sup> This plate—one side in Ahom, and the other in Sanskrit and Assamese—is in the possession of Karunaprasad Sarma of Kamakhya.
- <sup>32</sup> This plate was examined by the writer through the courtesy of Sri M. M. Choudhury, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, on 31.10.74.
- <sup>33</sup> This plate is at present in the Assam State Museum, Gauhati. The inscriptions in Sanskrit and Assamese are given in *Prachya-Sasanavali* by M. Neog, plate no. 140.
- <sup>34</sup> This plate—one side in Ahom and the other in Sanskrit and Assamese—was examined by the writer through the courtesy of Sri M. M. Choudhury, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, on 31.10.74.
- <sup>35</sup> The inscriptions in Sanskrit and Assamese are given in *Prachya-*



*Sasanavali* by M. Neog, plate no. 82.

- <sup>36</sup> This plate—one side in Ahom, the other side in Sanskrit and Assamese—is at present in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Gauhati.
- <sup>37</sup> A photograph of the inscription in Ahom is to be seen in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Gauhati. It is perhaps the same plate mentioned in the *Report and Conspectus* of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti for 1927-28-29-30, p. 51.
- <sup>38</sup> This plate is at present in the Assam State Museum. Its inscriptions in Sanskrit and Assamese are given in *Prachya-Sasanavali* by M. Neog, plate no. 148. A reading of its inscription in Ahom was published by the writer in the *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Vol. XVII, 1963, pp. 88-92.
- <sup>39</sup> The inscriptions in Sanskrit and Assamese are given in *Prachya-Sasanavali* by M. Neog, plate no. 100.
- <sup>40</sup> The inscriptions in Sanskrit and Assamese are given in *Prachya-Sasanavali* by M. Neog, plate no. 151.
- <sup>41</sup> The plate—one side in Ahom, the other side in Sanskrit and Assamese—was examined by the writer through the courtesy of Sri M. M. Choudhury, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, on 31.10.74.
- <sup>42</sup> A similar work was translated by Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Barua and published from Dibrugarh in 1901.
- <sup>43</sup> During my survey of old Ahom manuscripts, I came across such manuscripts in the possession of priestly families in Sibsagar Sub-division. The list of such persons will be quite long here, and hence is avoided.
- <sup>44</sup> The recent acquisitions are reported in the *Indian Archaeology Reviews*.
- <sup>45</sup> Published by Sri Douglaswar Konger, President, Tai Historical and Cultural Society of Assam, 1972.
- <sup>46</sup> Acharyya, N. N., *The History of Medieval Assam*, Gauhati, 1966, p. 70.
- <sup>47</sup> Bhuyan, S. K. (ed.), *An Account of Assam*, Gauhati, 1940, pp. 17-18.
- <sup>48</sup> Bhuyan, S. K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, 1949, p. 219 ; Gogoi, P., *The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms*, Gauhati, 1968, pp. 544-45 ; Barua, A., 'An Aspect of Tai-Ahom Polity' in *Lik Phan Tai*, Vol. I, 1966, pp. 75-76.

# SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL ASSAM

DR. GIRISH PRASAD SINGH  
(*St. Anthony's College, Shillong*)

## I

THE HISTORY of medieval Assam is still shrouded in mystery. In order to lift the veil of mystery it is necessary at the very outset to conduct a critical examination of all the relevant and available sources, both published and unpublished. I have attempted here to present, as far as possible, only those sources which are primary in nature, scope and value. The sources may be arranged in the following order :

## II FOREIGN ACCOUNTS

(a) *Persian Chronicles* : The historical value of the following Persian sources has been widely acknowledged by different chroniclers and authors.

*Tabakat-i-Nasiri* : It is a general history of the Muhammadan Dynasties of Asia including Hindustan from A.H. 194 (810 A.D.) to A.H. 658 (1260 A.D.) written by Minhaj-us-Siraj.<sup>1</sup> It is the only valuable source for getting the details of early Muslim invasions of Assam in the thirteenth century. The author furnishes the most trustworthy account of the invasion of Bakhtiyar Khilji, his defeat and the total annihilation of his army 12,000 strong in 1205-6 A.D., the successive repulses sustained by Ghyasuddin Iwaz in 1226 A.D. and Nasiruddin, the son of Iltutmish, in 1228 A.D. during the time of Raja Prithu and Malik Yuzbak's invasion and occupation of "the city of Kamrud"

(Kamrup), his retreat along the foot of the Khasi and the Garo Hills, his defeat in the stiff battle in hilly terrain in 1256-57 A.D. and his imprisonment during the time of King named Sandhya. This account is corroborated by other sources.<sup>2</sup>

*Riyaz-us-Salatin* : It is a history of Bengal by Ghulam Hussain Salim,<sup>3</sup> providing a reliable account of the invasions of Bakhtiyar Khilji (1205-6 A.D.) and Alauddin Hussain Shah about 1498 A.D. and their defeats and the victory of Raja of Kamrup. This Persian text also presents a continuous narrative of Mughal wars in Eastern Bengal and Assam as well as the political relations of the Muslim viceroys of Bengal with the Ahoms and the Koches besides other sporadic incidents. About the basic value of the *Riyaz*, Blochmann, the great antiquarian, oriental scholar and researcher, in his *Contribution to the History and Geography of Bengal* opines : "The *Riyaz* is much prized as being the fullest account in Persian of the Muhammadan history of Bengal which the author brings down to his own time (1786-88)." Stewart's *History of Bengal* is principally based on this Persian work incorporating less reliable and accurate account from Ferishta who belonged to the seventeenth century.

*Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* is a history of the Mughal wars in Assam, Bengal and Orissa during the reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan compiled or collated by Mirja-Natham<sup>4</sup> alias Shitab Khan, the Mughal Faujdar of Gauhati in 1051 A.H. corresponding to 1641 A.D. This Persian text—a literary classic—is practically the only contemporary, reliable and authentic account copiously dealing with the wars of the Mughals, with the Ahoms, the Koches, the Kacharis, the hill tribes of Assam, and the Raja of Tipperah during the period concerned, and the socio-economic and political organisation of the kingdom. Recognising its intrinsic value, Professor J. N. Sarkar<sup>5</sup> states : "Its value lies in the full details which it supplies. . . . of the long and endless war of the Mughal Empire with the Mongoloid Kingdom on its Eastern border, viz., Kuch Bihar, Assam under Assamese, Kachar, Tipperah. In respect of the wars our extant information as given in the Persian Annals of Jahangir and Shahjahan is meagre, the *Baharistan* greatly supplements and corrects from the Mughal

side dates sparingly given like Shihabuddin Talish's work."

*Fathiyya-i-Ibriyah* also called *Tarikh-i-Ashom* or *Tarikh-i-Mulk-i-Assam*, consisting of a short preface or introduction (*Muqaddimah*) at two parts (*Maqalah*), was written on twentieth Shawal 1073 A.H. or sometimes between 9th August 1662 and 13th May 1663 A.D. by Shihabuddin Talish<sup>o</sup> who accompanied Mir Jumla as *Waqiahnavis* or news-reporter. This Persian text besides giving a general description of Assam with special reference to all the events that occurred at the time of Mir Jumla's invasion of Assam in 1662-63 A.D. exhaustively deals with manners and customs, religion and culture, and arts and crafts of both plain and hill people.

*Ain-i-Akbari* by Shaikh Abul Fazl,<sup>7</sup> completed in 1596-97 A.D., is by far the greatest work in the whole series of Muhammadan histories of India and a unique master-piece of history which is considered as authentic, priceless and praiseworthy. This Persian text ranks very high among the contemporary accounts of the period. As an authentic chronicle of Akbar's reign it affords us a good glimpse of divisions of Kamrup, the manners and habits of the people and the Mughal wars with the Rajas of Hill Tipperah. Its value lies in the fact that it embodies those facts in quest of which we generally turn to administrative reports, statistical compilations and gazetteers. Though Abul Fazl has often been accused by European writers of flattery, nevertheless his statements are worthy of credence. It can be asserted that he was to Akbar what Boswell was to Dr. Johnson. As Blochmann remarks : "No native writer has ever accused him of flattery and if we bear in mind that all Eastern works on ethics recommended unconditional assent to the opinion of the King, whether correct and absurd, as the duty of man and that the whole Poetry of the East is a rank mass of flattery at the side of which modern encomiums look like withered leaves, we may pardon Abul Fazl when he praises because he finds a true hero." <sup>8</sup>

*Akbarnamah* by Shaikh Abul Fazl<sup>o</sup> provides a very useful information about Man Singha's intervention in Kuch Bihar due to mutual rivalries of Raja Lakshminarayan and Raghudeb.

*Hamirnamah*, written by Munshi Muhammad Kazim<sup>16</sup> in 1665 A.D. provides an astonishing wealth of information about Mir Jumla's and Ram Singha's invasions of Assam (1662-63, 1666/1667 A.D.) and the political condition of Kuch Bihar and Assam. In order to examine the authenticity of this Persian account some other corroborative evidences<sup>17</sup> need to be consulted.

*Farikh-i Farishtah* by Muhammad Qasim<sup>18</sup> provides the most dependable account of the war between Shankta, King of Kamrup and Peeranwesa, the General of Afrasiyab, King of Turan and Sakhia.

*Muntakhab ul Lubab* or *Farikh-i Akhbari Khan* by Muhammad Husain Ali Khan, surnamed Akhbar Khan, throws a good deal of light on Mughal invasion of Kuch Bihar and Assam.

*Shah-Namah* by Fakhari<sup>19</sup> deals with the contest between Sher-e-Jamra, King of Kamrup and Bahram Gur, Sultan of Persia.

*Fuzul-i Jahangiri* by Mutamad Khan<sup>20</sup> provides an interesting account of the aid given by Emperor Jahangir to the Kuch Bihar Fakhr-i-Narayan against his nephew Parikshit.

*Puduhah-Namah* by Muhammad Quazwini, Abdul Hamid Fakhri and Muhammad Wariq is very useful for getting the details of the invasion of Assam by Aditya Khan during the reign of the Akbar King Pratap Singha and Emperor Shah-Jahan.

The *Far-i-Hamgiri* by Muhammad Khan<sup>21</sup> is of exceptional value for extracting the materials about Assam-Mughal conflicts of the Jai Singh and post-Jai Singh periods (1660-1681 A.D.).

*Maarif ul-Furusiya* by Shah Nawaz Khan<sup>22</sup> is of immense value as it furnishes a very reliable account about the participation of several Mughal officers and generals in the Assam-Mughal wars and the narratives of their Assam excursions during the period 1660-1680 A.D.

*Indikat ul-Fara* by Yaqut Ali Bin Ghulam Ali Khan deals with Mir Jumla's invasion of Assam.<sup>23</sup>

*Kudrat ul-Shuhada* by Pir Muhammad Shattari brings into

Twilight the war between Shah Ismail (Azeri) and Karamanli  
king of Hamur."

Apart from the aforementioned Persian annals which are of exceptional value, the other Persian texts, like *Tarikh-i Furs* written by Zia al-Din Barani and by Shams al-Din al-Afshar in English in *History of a India series* dealing with the history of Bengal for the period between 1498 and 1558 A.D. *Mustakhbarat-i Musavvirah* by Bahadur, originally compiled during the life of the author in 1618 A.D. and translated from original Persian edited by George S. A. Jackson, Volume I, and by W. H. Jones, Volume II (first forty pages of the reign of Akbar I, published in *Eastern India series*, Series 10, *Mubtata-i Bahadur* (1618) of *Amuzgarah* by Ismail H. Mulla, published in 1911 A. D. in *India Oriental series*, No. 17, 1917, though many more original references are passing unnoted in the subject index, cannot be passed over in silence. They are of the greatest interest for our purpose.

On January 21, 1900, the Governor of California, George F. Peck, wrote to the Governor of Mexico, Don Porfirio Díaz, concerning the American claims to the Colorado River. The letter was signed by the Governor of California, George F. Peck, and the Secretary of State, John Hay. The letter was dated January 21, 1900, and was signed by the Governor of California, George F. Peck, and the Secretary of State, John Hay. The letter was dated January 21, 1900, and was signed by the Governor of California, George F. Peck, and the Secretary of State, John Hay.

Kantrap is the nineteenth century. It is the century of the



it only deals with the general mode of living of the Assamese people.

### III NATIVE CHRONICLES

The contemporary Assamese chronicles popularly known as *Buranjis* appear to be historical literature. The manners and customs, feelings and aspirations, anti-Mughal struggles and sacrifices, bravery and patriotism of the Assamese people as well as the politico-cultural relations of the Ahom monarchs with the neighbouring kingdoms during the medieval and early modern period up to 1824 A.D. are prolixly recorded in these chronicles. About the importance of this source Dr. S. K. Bhuyan<sup>21</sup> says : "The Buranjis were to the Assamese what the Bakhars were to the Mahrattas, the Twarikhis to the Moguls and the Persians, the Yazawins or Rajawins to the Burmese and the P'ongsawadans to the Siamese." The Assamese *Buranjis* can be broadly classified into two groups, viz., published and unpublished.

#### (a) *Published Buranjis*

*Deodhai Assam Buranji* with several shorter chronicles of Assam was edited by S. K. Bhuyan, D.H.A.S., Gauhati, 1932. The Ahom political relations with the Koches, Jayantias, Cachars, Mikirs, Chutiyas, Naras and Mantaras, the Ahom-Mughal conflicts during the period 1663-1682, and political, religious and administrative conditions are profusely narrated in this chronicle.

*Tungkhungia Buranji* or a history of Assam 1681-1826 A.D., edited and translated into English by S. K. Bhuyan, D.H.A.S., Gauhati, 1968, deals with the events during the period 1670 to 1824.

*Ahom Buranji* in the Ahom language with a parallel English rendering by G. C. Barua. Calcutta, 1930 (*A History of Assam from the Earliest Times to Purandar Singha, 1832-1838*), is a treasure-house of information about the Ahom wars with the Chutiyas, the Kacharis, the Koches, the Nagas and other tribes and various Muhammadan invasions of the time.

*Kamrupar Buranji* (D.H.A.S., 1930) is a detailed history of Ahom-Mughal conflicts of the seventeenth century covering the invasions of Allahyar Khan, Mirja Natham, Mir Jumla, Ram Singha and Masur Khan and the ultimate victory of the Ahoms in 1682. Eighteen diplomatic epistles are also incorporated in it.

*Padshah Buranji*, a chronicle of extraordinary importance published by the Kamarupa Anusandham Samiti, Gauhati, 1935, embodies numerous details closely connected with the Assam-Mughal conflicts comprising Jaisingh's subjugation of Eastern India, Mir Jumla's and Ram Singha's invasions of seventeenth century, the visits of the Assamese ambassadors to the imperial courts at Delhi and Agra, the incorporation of romantic episodes of the Badshahs, Begums, Omras, Mansabdars and Rajas in the court-chronicles of the day, etc. This chronicle has been translated into English by S. K. Bhuyan under the title *Annals of the Delhi Badshahate*, D.H.A.S., Gauhati, 1947. About the importance of this *Buranji* K. L. Barua<sup>22</sup> holds the view that "the Padshah Buranji served the ends of political vigilance as well as the intellectual curiosity of the Assamese people at a time when their virility and alertness combined with their anxiety to imbibe and assimilate the spirit of foreign culture enabled them to maintain their solidarity and independence against the aggressive imperialism of the Moghuls".

*Jayantia Buranji*, a history of Jayantia from the earliest times to the reign of Jayantia Raja Lakshmi Singha and Ahom King Swargadeo Siva Singha, edited by S. K. Bhuyan, D.H.A.S., Gauhati, 1937, is a very useful source for ascertaining the nature of the Ahom-Jayantia relations, the exchange of diplomatic epistles, etc.

*Kachari Buranji*, a history of Kachar from the earliest times to the reign of the Kachari Raja Tamradhwaj Narayan and the Ahom King Swargadeo Rudra Singha, edited by S. K. Bhuyan, D.H.A.S., Gauhati, 1936, deals with the Ahom-Kachari relations up to 1714.

*Tripura Buranji* provides a descriptive and historical account of the events during the period 1710 to 1715 when Ratna Kandali

and Arjun Das Bairagi, two Ambassadors of Assamese King Rudra Singha, were deputed to the Tripura court. This has been collated from the original manuscript in the British Museum, London, D.H.A.S., 1938.

*Assam Buranji* by H. D. Phukhan (Bengali edn., Calcutta, 1929) throws light on socio-economic, political, administrative, judicial and religious aspects of the time.

*Assam Buranji* by G. Barua (Calcutta, 1876) is a historical account of political condition, dynastic changes, commercial, religious and artistic progress of the time.

*Assam Buranji* by S. K. Dutta (Gauhati, 1928) is a useful source for collecting the information about internal intrigues following Mir Jumla's invasions.

*Purani Assam Buranji* edited by H. C. Goswami (Gauhati, 1922), is especially important for furnishing the details of Muhammadan invasions during the seventeenth century.

Mention should also be made of the book entitled *Lachit Barphukan and His Times* by S. K. Bhuyan (D.H.A.S., Gauhati, 1947), a history of the Ahom-Mughal conflict of the period 1667 to 1671 A.D. especially dealing with the invasions of Mir Jumla, Rm. Singha and Mursh Khan (1662-1682), the unexampled valour and patriotism of Lachit Barphukan (who has been compared with valiant warriors like Siven and Rana Pratap and as the architect and saviour of the nation with Mazzini, Cavour and Garibaldi of Italy), the numerous sanguinary land and naval battles fought between the Mughals and the Ahoms, successive overtures and reverses of the Mughals and their desultory warfare, the glorious victory of the Ahoms, and the well-calculated plan of Rudra Singha to expel the Mughals from Bengal with the help of neighbouring tribes and rulers in 1714 and extend his dominion as far as the Ganges. *History of Assam* by Edward Gent (second edn., 1926) is also a valuable source for our purpose, as it provides an exhaustive account of the Koch, the Jaintia, the Kachari and the Chutiya kingdoms, the Ahom tribal relations and the early Muhammadan invasions.

## (b) *Unpublished Buranjs*

*Assam Buranj* compiled from the original sources under the supervision of H. C. Goxwama (D.H.A.) presents nothing in a collection of 127 letters exchanged between the King and Queen of Assam and the Queen of Lohit. These letters relate to the Jayantia, Kachar and Sylhet, etc.

*Assam Buranj* derived by the D.H.A. from the original Goxwama Grantha is a history from the conquest of the Garo, Jaintia and Kachhar country up to the Moghul in 1662.

*Assam Buranj* obtained from the library of Sri Kanta Kanta Kavyajyoti, of Garo, presents a very full narrative of Ahom conflicts with the Naga, the Chakma, the Boro, the Morins, the Bhuyan, and the Kachar, Assam, Manipal conflicts and other events up to the reign of Chakrabarti, 1662.

Besides these three there are numerous unpublished Assamese chronicles which are very helpful in conducting the detailed survey and proper examination of the subject matter. But space does not permit me to mention all the sources here.

Here it is worthwhile to mention that both the Persian and the Assamese chronicles are equally valuable and supplementary and complementary to each other. At the same time it is an undeniable fact that some recorded information available in *Assamese Buranjs* are conspicuously by their absence in Persian chronicles and vice versa. Both deserve careful and diligent study by historians. Notwithstanding the fact that the history of these two primary sources is undesirable, we are constrained to observe that the defective chronology, the hopeless and over-credulous historical and quasi-historical records, tales and legends, the lack of the Assamese chronicles such as their excessive eulogistic tones, idiosyncratic expressions, and the exaggerated statements about campaigns and conquests, the defective bloodshed and atrocities and moral code and indistinct phraseology and the vague geographical description of the Muhammadan chronicles make it difficult to rely completely on both these sources as trustworthy historical records. It is in-

perative to consult other interspersed narratives relating to the subject, some other standard historical texts and treatises and other collateral evidences for confirmation, corroboration and proper and careful evaluation of facts, figures and data. To quote H. Beveridge,<sup>23</sup> "Nearly all Eastern Histories are disfigured by adulation. Even when the author has had no special reason for flattery and for suppression of truth, he has been dazzled by the greatness of his subjects, and he gives us a picture which no more reveals the real King than does a telescope the real constitution of the Morning Star. But when Eastern Monarchs give us chronicles, the case is different. They have no occasion for fear or favour and they mercilessly expose the failings of their contemporaries. Not they are to be trusted any more than other orientals, when speaking of themselves."

#### IV ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

(a) *Epigraphy*: Epigraphy is undisputably the most important source for acquiring an accurate knowledge of various stages of long-forgotten past. This also helps us in determining the accurate chronology. Unfortunately both inscriptions and coins are limited in number. The recorded rock-cut North Gauhati (Kanai Badasi) Inscription<sup>24</sup> was caused by Raja Prithu, the King of Kamrup, to commemorate the entire destruction of Bakhtiyar Khilji's army in 1206 A.D. The Inscription runs as follows: "(Saka, 1127) Sake turaga yugmese Madhumasatrayodase Kamarupam samagatya Turushkah kshayam—ayayuh" (In Saka 1127 on the 13th day of the month of Chaitra (Madhu) the Turushkas arrived at Kamrup but were completely annihilated). The Persian account of Bakhtiyar's invasion of Assam is easily confirmed by this epigraphy. The inscription<sup>25</sup> from Gachtal in Nowgong, issued in the Saka year 1149 corresponding to A.D. 1227, testifies to the second Muslim invasion of Ghiasuddin Iwaz up to Nowgong area. Besides rock inscriptions, some inscriptions on cannons captured from the Mughals also testify to the Ahom-Mughal struggle resulting in the ultimate victory of the former. The Lolarkakunda Inscription<sup>26</sup> of King Prana Narayana of Koch

Behar is very useful for getting the genealogy from Lakshmi Narayan (1587-1627 A.D.) to Prana Narayana (1632-1665), the Koch kings of Koch Behar. The stone pillar inscription of Gauhati bearing inscription in Sanskrit as pointed out by Edward Gait<sup>27</sup> irrefutably proves the victory of the Ahoms over the Yavanas (Muslims). Two other inscriptions on boulder at Kanai-barasi-bo-a-Sil in North Gauhati on the Eastern extremity known as Phulunger-garh confirm the Ahom victory over the Mughals in Saka 1589 (A.D. 1667).<sup>28</sup> The five inscribed copper-plate grants of the Jaintia Kings all with names Saka 1692, Saka 1710, Saka 1727 and Saka 1735 collected by E. A. Gait,<sup>29</sup> help us to maintain their correct genealogy and to know the growth of Hinduism in the medieval period. The Jaintiapur copper-plate inscriptions of Mahadevi Kasasati dated Sakabda 1710=A.D. 1788, 1723=A.D. 1801, and 1725=A.D. 1803<sup>30</sup> refer to the reigns of various Jaintia Kings, viz., Badagosai (1770), Chhatra Singha (1770-1781), Jatranarayan (1781-1786) and Vijay Narayana (1786-1789) and Ram Singha II (1790-1833). The inscription<sup>31</sup> on the rock-cut temple at Maibong in North Cachar ascribed to the Kachari King Harischandra Narayan of Sakabda 1643=A.D. 1721 shows the existence of the Hidimba Kingdom in the medieval period. The inscribed snake pillar at Sadiya installed by the Mishmis in 1532 A.D. (still in existence in Gauhati Museum) shows the text of the agreement entered into between the Ahom King and the Mishmis of Sadiya in the sixteenth century engraved on the hood of a stone snake carved round the stone pillar.

(b) *Numismatics* : The numismatic evidence is more accessible and dependable than the epigraphic evidence. In North-East India unfortunately we do not have sufficient references to this evidence, as very few kings adopted the practice of minting the coins in their own names. However, some coins have been found and deciphered. A coin minted by Ghiyasuddin Iwaz in 621 A.H. (1224 A.D.) found at Gauhati in 1880 proves beyond doubt that he proceeded as far as Gauhati and invaded Kamrup in 1226 A.D.<sup>32</sup> Edward Gait<sup>33</sup> refers to the Jaintia coins of Saka 1591=A.D. 1669, Saka 1592=A.D. 1670, Saka 1630=A.D. 1708, Saka 1653=A.D. 1731 (with name Raja Bura Gucai) Saka 1696=A.D.



1734, Saka 1704=A.D. 1782, Saka 1707=A.D. 1785 and Saka 1712=A.D. 1790 (with name Raja Ram Singha). Only two coins bear the name. This is further confirmed by the evidence furnished by V. A. Smith<sup>24</sup> who refers to the coins of Saka 1630=1708 A.D. and Saka 1653=1731 A.D. The text of the gold coins<sup>25</sup> of the Kachari Kings Bhimadarpa Narayan dated Saka 1552=1630 A.D. and Harischandra Narayan dated Saka 1642=1720 A.D. are also helpful for our purpose. Besides these coins those of Ahom King Suklenlung (1539-52) issued in the year 1544 and the coin of Koch King Nara Narayana of Saka 1477=1555 A.D. are also available.

The combined testimony of the above-mentioned sources will certainly help us in reconstructing the medieval history of Assam dealing not only with the chivalrous role which the Assamese people, both populace and potentates, played for nearly five centuries in stemming the progress of Muslim rule in Assam and their contribution in moulding the history of North-East India, but also with the socio-economic, political, administrative and religious aspects of the period, and the rise and fall of both plain and hill kingdoms in general.

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# BURANJI : A SOURCE MATERIAL FOR WRITING MEDIEVAL HISTORY OF ASSAM

LILA GOGOI  
(Dibrugarh University)

## I

BURANJI is a word of Chinese-Thai origin. The etymology of the word has been given by several scholars. Dr. Bhuyan states : "They are known as *buranjis*, which is an Ahom word, literally meaning 'a store that teaches the ignorant'."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Grierson remarks : "The Assamese word for a 'history' is *buranji*, which is an Ahom word, viz., bu-ran-ji, literally, 'Ignorant-teach-store', a store of instruction for the ignorant."<sup>2</sup> Hem Chandra Goswami,<sup>3</sup> Padmanath Gohain Barua,<sup>4</sup> Golap Chandra Barua,<sup>5</sup> and others also give the same etymology. The Ahoms adopted the art of writing to memorise their past events, full of glory and bravery, and through the account of those events they tried to provide inspiration to teach the growing generation. It was even believed that the future could be ascertained by consulting hand-written chronicles.<sup>6</sup> Some important chapters of the *buranji* were recited in the *cak-lang*, the Ahom form of marriage.<sup>7</sup> The bride's party had to narrate the past history of the family concerned in the royal marriages.<sup>8</sup>

Even though the word *buranji* is of Chinese-Thai origin, it is very popularly used in Assamese, and it means generally all historical accounts or documents. The Ahoms applied the word *buranji* to mean old records of the Ahom rule but now it is used widely to cover all historical records. The historical record of Satra, a religious monastery, is known as *Satriya buranji*.<sup>9</sup> The famous *Cakari Pheti Buranji*,<sup>10</sup> compiled by Numali Bargohain,

is nothing but a family history. The records of Cang-rung Phukan are called *Cang-rung Phukanar Buranji*. The historical records of the punishment of some Vaisnava *gosains* at Namrup during the reign of Gadadharasimha (1688-1696) are known as *Namrupiya Buranji*. At present all historical accounts of all subjects like Economics, Literature, Sociology, Politics, etc., are covered under the word *buranji*.

## II

The word *buranji* is synonymous to 'history' in English. But if we examine the matter critically the old *buranjis* of Assam are not history in the true sense of the term but are chronicles. Chronicle is "a historical record chronologically arranged, generally without discussion of causes of laws," (F. chronique/L. chronica/chronicus chronicle).<sup>11</sup> Assamese *buranjis* are really 'a register of facts and events in the order of time,<sup>12</sup> the facts are narrated without philosophical treatment',<sup>13</sup> causes and effects are not discussed. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says: "Chronicles are accounts generally of a character, and often anonymous, composed of passages copied from sources which the chronicler is seldom at pains to indicate, and of personal recollections, the veracity of which remains to be determined." In cases of Assamese *buranjis* this definition is fully applicable. Some *buranjis* are of impersonal character, and some of them anonymous. The Assamese chronicler did not indicate the sources from which he copied or collected materials.

"The historical works written in the middle ages are variously designated "histories", "annals", or "chronicles", Greek 'time' (Χρονος); it is difficult, however, to give an exact definition of each of these terms, since they do not correspond to determinate classes of writings."<sup>14</sup> S. K. Bhuyan rendered *Padshah Buranji* as 'Annals of the Delhi Badshahate' and *Tungkhunjiya Buranji* as 'Chronicle of the Tungkhunjiya Dynasty'. But both of them are of the same character. In one sense the Assamese *buranjis* are history, because history is 'past events in general, considered as accomplished facts or as material for re-

cord, as the events have passed into history."<sup>10</sup>

Annals are 'a record of events in their chronological order, year by year; hence any narrative of events in which the order of time rather than casual relation, is followed or made prominent chronicles'.<sup>16</sup> The Assamese *buranji*s are written chronologically. In a flexible sense, a *buranji* can be annotated to 'annals' but the best rendering of the word would be chronicle. Dr. S. K. Chatterji accepted the word history for *buranji*.

### III

The word *buranji* is also used in place of *itihasa* but the word *itihasa* has its own characteristic history. The ancient Hindus placed *itihasa* (*itihasa-puran*) on the same level as the four Vedas.

rgyajuh-samatharvakhya vedascatvara uddhritah  
itihasa-purananca pancamaveda ucyate.<sup>17</sup>

The Aryans included some stories, legends or events which can teach *dharmo*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksa*

dharmarthakamamoksanam upadesa samanvitam  
purvavrttakathayuktamitihasa prasaksate.<sup>18</sup>

dharmakamarthayuktam sastram vividhani ca  
lokatrayavidhanam ca sarva tad drstabanasi  
itihasa sarvayakhya vividhah srutayoapi ca  
iha savamanukrantamuktang granthasya iksanam.<sup>19</sup>

As pointed out by Macdonell, 'Itihasa as a kind of literature, is repeatedly mentioned along with Puranas in the latter texts of the Vedic period.'<sup>20</sup> It first appeared in the Atharvaveda.<sup>21</sup> Both *itihasa* and *purana* dealt with 'old legends of all sorts, heroic, cosmogonic, genealogical.'<sup>2</sup> *Itihasa* appears in the Satapatha Brahmana,<sup>21</sup> the Jaiminiy,<sup>24</sup> Brihadaranyaka,<sup>25</sup> and Chandogya Upanisad,<sup>26</sup> Gopatha Brahmana<sup>27</sup> and Satapatha Brahmana<sup>28</sup> identify the *itihasa* and *purana* with the Vedas. The works entitled *itihasa* and *purana* may thus be considered as fifth veda



referring to the great body of Indian mythology, legendary history, and cosmogonic.

The Assamese chronicles give accounts of human events. There are, of course, some myths and legends interspersed here and there. The main narrative of the Assamese chronicle is always factual. *Itihasa* of Indian tradition was written to teach moral lessons, and it was the purpose of the *buranjis* too.<sup>29</sup>

#### IV

The Ahoms belonged to Siamese-Chinese family of the Mongoloid stock.<sup>30</sup> They are known by various names, Tai, Htai, Hkun, Lu, Lao, Hkamti. In North Burma there are some names given to them like Pai, Moi, Moun, Tho or Do, Law, Tai-long, Tai-nai, Tai-mao, Tai-no, Tai-man, Tai-khe, Pu-tai, Pu-nong, Puman, Pu-ju, Pu-chei, Pu-en, Pu-eyi, Pu-shui, P'o, Pa, Shui-an, or Hua, Pai-i, Pai-jen, T'u-jen, P'u-man, Pai, Hei, or Hua, T'u-lao, Nung or Lung-jen, Sha-jen, Hei or Pai Sha-jen, Minchia, Shui-chia, Chung-chia.<sup>31</sup> The Tais inhabited in Assam are Ahom or Tai-Ahom or Kham-tai,<sup>32</sup> Khamti or Tai-khamti, Aitaniya or Tai-aiton, Phakiyal or Tai-phake, Turung or Tai-Aiton and Nora or Tai-khamyang. The Tai-khamyangs are called Nora by the Assamese speaking people but 'the Noras are called Tai-Man-Nam'. "The Tais are a very ancient race and like other such races their origin is shrouded in obscurity."<sup>33</sup> As pointed out by Sir George Scott, a well known authority on the Shans, the first wave of the Tai entered Northern Burma two thousand years ago.<sup>34</sup> They have no traditions of their pre-historic wanderings,<sup>35</sup> but they later came to possess a tradition of writing chronicles in later period. Dr. Bhuyan states: "The Siamese and the Burmese have maintained voluminous chronicles of their countries, known as P'ongsawadana and Azawans respectively, which show their historical instinct, though not critical according to our modern conception."<sup>36</sup> The Tais of Burma are known as Shans. The Ahoms who migrated from North Burma are indisputably Shans who had age-old traditions of writing chronicles, known to them as *buranji*.

Sukapha who founded the Ahom kingdom in Assam brought with him the tradition of writing *buranji*. Crossing the river Nam-kiu, on way to the Brahmaputra Valley, he counted his followers at Kham-jang and found sixty persons dead and seven persons missing. Then the king issued an injunction to his followers, the *pandits*: "The *pandits* shall keep record in writing whenever some one dies, or when some one meets us, or when something happens on the way."<sup>37</sup> Dr. Bhuyan considers that the Ahoms introduced historiography into Assam which is the greatest cultural contribution made to their land of adoption.<sup>38</sup>

## V

In the early period of Ahom supremacy in Assam the chronicles were written in Ahom, the language of Chinese-Thai origin. Gradually the Ahoms accepted Assamese of Indo-Aryan origin. They were bilingual for two to three centuries. But the priests and astrologers of the Ahoms like the Deodhais and the Bailungs worked in their own language. With the gradual absorption of Hindu ideals and customs including the adoption of Assamese as the language for keeping official records, the chronicles came to be compiled in Assamese also. *Buranji* as a medium of instruction covers the affairs both of gods and human beings. According to the subject-matter of the chronicles, it was divided into two classes—*deo buranji* and *din buranji*.<sup>39</sup> *Deo buranji* gives an account of the world and its creation.<sup>40</sup> It also deals with Khun-lung and Khun-lai,<sup>41</sup> the grandsons of Indra, the king of heaven. Indra sent them to establish a kingdom at Mung-ri-mung-ram, an uninhabited and deserted country.

*Deo buranji* is nothing but a legendary and mythical account of the origin of the world. There are two legends regarding the origin of the Ahom kings.<sup>42</sup> The first one relates to Indra. It tallies very closely with that of the chronicles still preserved amongst the Shans of Upper Burma, and the second one is a modification of the former in the line of Hindu mythology. Anyhow, both the myths agree in attributing a divine ancestry of the Ahoms. *Deo buranji* records both the types of legends.





*Din buranji*<sup>43</sup> which deals with the human affairs begin with the establishment of different kingdoms by the descendants of Khun-lung and Khun-lai. The number of *din buranjis* is considerably bigger than that of *deo buranjis*. In this class of chronicles we may find the account of the reign of Ahom kings in Assam along with the glimpses of Shan rulers of Northern Burma. It also contains aspects of the Ahom administration in Assam along with the social life of the Ahoms. The *din buranji* records the history of the Ahom rule in Assam from Sukapha to the advent of the British.

## VI

The Tai people very often use the words *bu-lan-ji* and *bu-la-ci* along with the *buranji*. Even though the etymology of both the words is not identical, they have unity in sense. *Bu-lan-ci* means 'documents about happenings of olden days' which are not known to the grandsons.<sup>44</sup> To some extent *bu-lan-ci* is also a synonym of the word *buranji*. The word *bu-lan-ji* also carries the same sense. It means 'a grannery of documents for ignorant grandsons'.<sup>45</sup> *Pu-lan-ci*<sup>46</sup> is also in use which means the stories or tales, historical or non-historical, told by a grandfather to his grandsons. Very often the grandfather would tell the stories of their ancestors which formed parts of the historical records. But *pu-lan-ci* is a flexible term and covers all sorts of stories, tales, fables, traditional records and historical accounts. *Pu-lan-ci* may stand for the term folklore of modern times, but it also transmits knowledge from generation to generation.

## VII

Chronicles written in the Ahom period are divided into two types *lar-hk* and *lit buranji*. Some of the chronicles were voluminous, written in detail and some of them were concise or confined to a particular small series of events, or a very limited period only.<sup>47</sup>

The chronicles written in detail and voluminous in size are called *lai-lik buranji*. *Lai-lik* is an Ahom term.<sup>40</sup> Generally a *lai-lik buranji* contains all possible information about a particular period or topic. It includes the report transmitted to the king by the generals on war front, the frontier governors, as also diplomatic correspondences with foreign countries, judicial records, reports of the envoys, day-to-day annals of the court, incorporating all transactions done, important utterances made, significant occurrences reported by the reliable eye witnesses. Of course, there is no rigid distinction between *lai-lik* and *lit*. It is to be called *lai-lik* or *lit* after considering the size of the chronicle. A small fragment of a chronicle which deals with the situation arising out of Rudrasimha's proposal of changing religion, is called *lai-lik buranji*.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps this was part of an exhaustive work on the reign of Rudrasimha. A voluminous chronicle was found in the possession of an individual at Nao sahya, Tingkhong, district Lakhimpur, with the name of *lai-lik buranji*. The chronicle, of course, was written in the Tai language.<sup>42</sup>

*Lit buranji* is a small volume of old records. It contains a short account of important events. Some of them were confined to a particular period narrated briefly. Generally very important historical matters are recorded in the *lit buranji*. It was treated as holy as can be inferred from the name.<sup>43</sup> Sometimes the writer would narrate some important events from his memory and sometimes from his personal experience. As for example, *Ramsimhar Yuddhar Katha*<sup>44</sup> was compiled by an eye-witness. This is a small volume and it is confined to the account of the battle of Saraghat. Considered from the point of size, this chronicle may be named *lit buranji*. This division is considered from the point of volume and not from the point of matter and manner.

## VIII

Some of the chronicles contain all conceivable details and are called *ru-put*.<sup>45</sup> The etymological meaning of the term is



record for instruction. Atan Buragham, the state chronicler wrote in his chronicle that he compiled his work with the help of a *ru put*.<sup>52</sup> The term *ru put* is found in the manuscript of Atan Buragham<sup>53</sup> and the word *u put* appears in one of the chronicles incorporated in the *Pradhañ Atan Burang*. The *u put* is a form where the important events of the past are recorded in a straight chronological and simple way.<sup>54</sup> Wade refers to king Sivassimha when he writes: "Sivassimha issued his mandate that the histories of his predecessors should be compiled, the succession of Aborn Monarchs mentioned in detail and the book called *Ruqut*."<sup>55</sup> This *Ruqut* was compiled by Manchar Hadung Thuban.<sup>56</sup> It begins with the reign of king Suhungmung and ends with an account of Siya. *Ru put* contains the names and transactions of the Burgeleus.<sup>57</sup> Atan Buragham's chronicle is a short account of the reigns of the Aborn kings and not an exhaustive work.<sup>58</sup> It was compiled in a concise form with matters taken from a *ru put*.<sup>59</sup> Hence *ru put* may have been used for *burang* synonymously.

## IX

A chronicle found at Akhaya Deulbargaon, Patna, is known as *Tu bu lai burang*.<sup>60</sup> It may be a colloquial form of the Aborn name *Tu bu lai burang*. *Tu bu lai* means a book which is a book for the grantant. It might be the name of a particular volume or *puta* given by the chronicler at his own choice. This was however, not found in common use or it may not be considered as a name. The particular chronicle named *Tu bu lai burang* was composed during the reign of Parmanandha (1111-1140) and it covers the period from Rajesvarasimha (1011-1040) to Parmanandha. During these the father of Parmanandha, the king, died.

A chronicle composed by Nanda Buragham is named as *Atan Puñ Burang*.<sup>61</sup> The king Nanda Buragham which is closely with the family history of the Aborn. After this the later chronicles dealing with the family history of the Aborn.



*Tripura Desor Katha*, the story of Tripura. The chronicle compiled by Atan Buragohain is commonly known as *Bahgariya Buragohain Buranji* but it was originally named 'Sri Sri Svarga Maharajar Vamsa Nirnay'.<sup>67</sup> But in another version incorporated in *Satsari Asam Buranji*, it appears thus, 'Sri Sri Svarga Maharaja rajar Pratham Purusar Vamsar Kathan'.<sup>68</sup> Referring to this term Dr. Bhuyan states : "The chronicle compiled by him was entitled 'Sri-Sri-Svarga-Maharajar-vamsa-nirnay', or an account of the Ahom kings of Assam, the *vamsa*, originally meaning a family, being applied also to a history or a narrative of a ruling dynasty, or of a celebrated organisation or institution",<sup>69</sup> *Sri Sri Svarganarayan Rajar Vamsavali Katha* appears to be a generic name for all accounts of the Ahom kings. A family history is generally known as *vamsavali*. It is also observed that the term *buranji* was used to mean the history of a family.<sup>70</sup> Srinath Duara Barbarua, however, used both the terms *vamsa* and *buranji* in the preamble to his chronicle.<sup>71</sup>

The whole history of the Ahoms in Assam is the history of the same ruling dynasty descended from Khun-lung and Khun-lai. The Siamese people call their chronicles P'ongsawadanas<sup>72</sup> and the Burmese Yazawans. P'onsawadana or Phomsavadana is just equivalent to the Sanskrit *Vamsavadana*, *Yazawins*, *Azawins* or *Razawan* of the Burmese *Rajavamsa*.<sup>73</sup>

The Nepalese chronicles are also called *Vamsavali*. One of the Nepali chronicles gives "in its own way a genealogy of kings with names and duration of their reigns supplemented with a brief noting of the principal events".<sup>74</sup> Tin oha, a Burmese historian, observes as regards the sources of the Burmese *yazawins*, that the authors owe as much to Pali works, such as commentaries, *Mahavamsa* and *Dvipavamsa* as to local traditions.<sup>75</sup> The word *vamsa* appears to have been popularised by the Buddhist monks. Two of the Siamese chronicles *Jinakalamalini* and *Rajadhiraj*, were compiled in Pali.<sup>76</sup>

As Assamese chronicles are divided into two classes, viz., *lai-lik* and *lit*, the Burmese chronicles are also classified into three divisions—Maha Yazawin Gyi, Yazawin Lat and Yazawin Choke.<sup>77</sup> The indigenous writings of South East Asia are found

in Burmese, Mon, Thai, or Siamese, Malay, Khmer, Javanese, Balinese, Buginese, and Vietnamese.<sup>78</sup> J. Noordu remarks on Macassar-Bugineses historiography : "The chronicles form a literary genre, written in a simple prose-style, their composition, style, and choice of words were to a great extent left to the author or the copyist. Moreover, they contain, almost all of them, no dates. Chronological details are given in the distances (years, months or days)".<sup>79</sup> This remark is applicable in case of the Assamese chronicles too.

The *Vamsavali* of Nepal written in Nepalese and Newari are the most important historical documents as they give the indigenous account of Nepal.<sup>80</sup> Luciano Petch observes that a *vamsavali* is primarily what its title indicates ; a string of generations, i.e., a genealogical list, which in its simplest form gives merely the names of the rulers with the duration of the reigns in years and months.<sup>81</sup> History of Nepal translated from the *Parbatiya* into English by Munshi Shew Shunkar Singh and Pandit Sri Gunanand is a typical example of Nepali chronicles. Daniel Wright, the editor, considers this *vamsavali* to be a genealogical history of Nepal.<sup>82</sup> *Gopallaraaj Vamsavali* written in 1390 A.D. is an accurate account of medieval Nepal.<sup>83</sup> At any rate the Nepalese *vamsavalis* have similarity with Assamese *buranjis*. It is observed that people of all the countries who are habituated in writing and preserving chronicles use the term *vamsa* or *vamsavali*, or other synonymous words for the same.

The chronicles written in verse under the patronage of the Kos kings are also entitled as *vamsavali*, viz., *Darang Rajavamsavali* of Valadeva Suryyakhari Daivajna, *Rajavamsavali* of Ratikanta Dvija, *Gandharvanarayana Vamsavali* by Suryyadeva Siddhantavagis, etc.<sup>84</sup> Over and above the chronicles dealing with the royal dynasties, a good number of *vamsavalis* were also written in the satras. Generally biographies or *carit puthis* of Vaisnava saints were written in verse and are popularly known as *carit*. But *Damodara Vamsavali* or *Govinda Vamsavali* of Vidyanan Dvija Oja,<sup>85</sup> *Vamsavali Puthi* of Cidanandadeva,<sup>86</sup> *Santa Vamsavali*,<sup>87</sup> *Narowa Gosai Vamsavali*,<sup>88</sup> *Gomatha Vamsa-*

*vali*,<sup>89</sup> are quite identical in manner with the *carit puthis*. We can come to the conclusion that a chronicle dealing with a particular dynasty or family is called *vamsavali* or *vamsa*.

## XII

The word *katha* also frequently appears in the Assamese chronicles. Sometimes it is used in the title and very often found in the sub-titles. According to J. N. Farquhar, *katha* is a 'composition in prose which breaks into verse when the story becomes surcharged with feeling'.<sup>90</sup> In Sanskrit *katha* was composed in narrative prose. But sometimes the poetic rhythm is felt and in some places the rhyme also appears. Bhattadeva entitled his prose Bhagavata and Gita as *Bhagavata Katha* and *Katha Gita*. Gopalchara Dviija used the word *Kathabandha* in his prose version of Sankardeva's *Bhakti Ratnakara*. Ram Rai also used the term *kathabandha* in his *Gurulila*.<sup>91</sup> But the *katha* used in Sanskrit and old Assamese is not synonymous,<sup>92</sup> although *Bhagavata Katha* contains some poetic pieces. The term *katha* of the chronicle was applied in a different way from Sanskrit. The *katha* as found in the Assamese *buranjis* is neither imaginary nor poetic. It is a narrative prose of historical facts. *Katha* in a general sense is a description, a story, an account.<sup>93</sup> In the Assamese chronicles, the *katha* was applied for historical account. As for example, *Bhaganiya Rajar Katha*,<sup>94</sup> *Jayanta Rajar Janma Katha*,<sup>95</sup> *Mecar Katha*,<sup>96</sup> *Kocar Katha*,<sup>97</sup> *Hedambeswarar Katha*,<sup>98</sup> *Narar Janma Katha*,<sup>99</sup> *Mikirar Adi Katha*,<sup>100</sup> and *Ramsinghar Yuddhar Katha*<sup>101</sup> appear in the chronicles both for legendary and historical accounts.

The term *lekha* also appears in the chronicles. In *Padshah Buranji*<sup>102</sup> and *Tripura Buranji*<sup>103</sup> *lekha* was used for historical account. *Carit* or the biography is a very popular term among the Vaisnavas of Assam. Dr. Barua observes : "The matter of the *carit puthis*, however, is to some extent subjective. A mere factual statement of events and incidents is never his aim." The biographer must show that his hero has touched and inspired

him. In his pages, the hero lives over again with his vicissitudes of fortune, his fortitude and faith. Here in these writings, we come, for the first time, into really intimate relation with the great personalities of Assam and see them in the company of contemporary men and women with whom they worked daily and conversed.<sup>104</sup> Though there is no similarity of *buranjis* to *carit puthis*, the term *carit* appears in the chronicles for historical account.<sup>105</sup>

### XIII

The Ahoms had three guilds of scholars and priests, Mohan, Bailung and Deodhai.<sup>106</sup> There was a chief of each guild who had some assistants. The chief priest enjoyed one hundred *puras* of land and *assistance* of sixty persons for service to the state. The scholars knew the Ahom language, tradition and history for guiding the king in his administration. The king appointed two officers to look after the affairs of the Bailungs and the Deodhais.<sup>107</sup> The Bailung Phukans were responsible for the Bailungs. The Deodhais were under the disposal of Deodhai Barua and were usually appointed from their own guild. The responsibilities of the Baruas and the Phukans were officially defined; they specialised in the original culture and traditional lore of the Ahoms. The Deodhais<sup>108</sup> were priests and they performed all the rites and ceremonies of the Ahoms on behalf of the kings. They worshipped the traditional gods. The Bailungs,<sup>109</sup> the traditional astrologers and scholars, helped the king, the nobility and the common people with their necessary guidance. The duties of the Mohans<sup>110</sup> are quite similar to those of the Cangmans of the Shans. As the Deodhais, Bailungs and Mohans were self-versed in the Ahom language and literature, they used to write *buranjis*. As such they were the founders of the historiography of Assam.



## XIV

One Laut<sup>111</sup> belonging to Ciring<sup>112</sup> clan came with Sukapha when the prince migrated from the Nara kingdom. The Cirings were employed as keepers and scribes. They were engaged for copying the manuscripts in Ahom language. They also came to write books of their own. Two officers under the designations of Ciring Phukan<sup>113</sup> and Bar Ciring Barua<sup>114</sup> were appointed for the supervision of the work of the Cirings. Having settled in Assam, the Ahoms gave up most of their rites and ceremonies and adopted Hinduism. The Cirings were also appointed to look after the worship of Comdeo, the Ahom deity.<sup>115</sup> Ciring Phukan was in charge of Ciring clan.<sup>116</sup> Generally he was nominated from among the Bailungs or from his own clan.<sup>117</sup> He must be one well-versed in the history, culture and language of the Ahoms. Moreover, he had to have a good knowledge of the language and dialects of the neighbouring countries.<sup>118</sup> He was in charge of the foreign envoys specially from Nara country, Burma, Bhutan, Manipur, Kachari, Jayantia, etc. In the reign of Kamalesvara Simha a letter from the queen of Mung-Kang was read and interpreted by the Ciring Phukan.<sup>119</sup> The Bar Ciring Barua, the principal private secretary of the king, assisted the Ciring Phukan as and when necessary. He had to help the king with necessary information and traditional counsel. Sometimes Bar Ciring was promoted to the post of Ciring Phukan. J. P. Wade mentions that the Ciring Phukan of his time was a Barua.<sup>120</sup> "Both the officers were connected with some religious functions. In all the ceremonies the Ciring Phukan presides and regulates everything according to the ancient customs of the kingdom."<sup>121</sup> All the four officers—Ciring Phukan, Bar Ciring Barua, Bailung Phukan and Deodhai Barua—were connected with the tradition of writing chronicles, but the Ciring Phukan was the superintendent of the office of historiography.<sup>122</sup> It may be mentioned here that Radhanath Barua who corrected or revised the chronicle compiled by Kasinath Tamuli Phukan belonged to the Ciring clan of Capaguri.<sup>123</sup> Padmesvar Naobaicha Phukan states in his chronicle that Radhanath Barbarua was a brother of Bar Ciring Barua and his son was appointed a Ciring Phukan.<sup>124</sup> The Ciring clan as well

its officers were necessarily associated with the profession of compiling chronicles. One Bailung Phukan and one Deodhai Barua helped Kashinath Tamuli Phukan<sup>125</sup> and it is likely that these two officers collected and interpreted the older chronicles for him.

The Ciring Phukan and his office were of great importance, prior to the adoption of Hindu religion and ideals by the monarchs. He was the 'professor of Nara and eastern countries'.<sup>126</sup> He was friend, philosopher and guide to the king. "He was the monarch's instructor in the profane literature of his ancestors. He entertained and instructed his royal pupil with the historical anecdotes of ancient time."<sup>127</sup> As an officer who had close association with the king and his affairs, he generally came to know of all events in the royal family, and had the definite privilege to go through the official records preserved in the royal archives, administrative papers, letters, judicial proceedings, old chronicles, reports of the *katakis*, etc. Moreover, he was entrusted with the work of compiling chronicle with all source-materials available in the royal archive. Radhanath Barbarua was probably a Ciring Phukan prior to his selection to the Barbaruaship. He had, therefore, authority to examine and revise Kashinath's chronicle. As Radhanath was born and brought up in Ciring clan, it is very likely that he was versed in religion and profane lore of the Ahoms.<sup>128</sup> The Ciring Phukan and the group of Ahom scholars appointed from Mohan, Bailung and Deodhai families, generally urged the duty of writing or compiling *buranjis*. This was a general rule as far as *buranjis* of the Ahom language are concerned till the fall of the Ahom monarchy. All the officers called Deodhai Barua or Deodhai Phukan,<sup>129</sup> Bailung Phukan,<sup>130</sup> Bar Ciring Barua,<sup>131</sup> Mo-cai Phukan, Bantung Barua,<sup>132</sup> Bailung Barua,<sup>133</sup> Nagariya Barua,<sup>134</sup> Duwaliya Phukan,<sup>135</sup> etc., were appointed to look after the affairs relating to religion, culture and tradition. They were connected in some way or other with the business of compilation of *buranjis*. Many of them compiled chronicles at their own initiative and preserved them in their private possession. *Buranjis* in the Ahom language written beautifully in very fast colour ink are still available in these families. Except the compilation of Golap Chandra Barua, no other Ahom chronicle has been printed and published.

## XV

The Ahoms adopted the Assamese language within two hundred years of their migration. Very early after their migration they married local women and from the second or third generation, Assamese became their mother tongue. Probably it is from the sixteenth century that the Ahoms started to write chronicle in Assamese language. Then the administration of royal historiography was reorganised with some modifications. The supervisory power over the compiling of chronicles was entrusted to the Prime Minister, the *Rajmantri*.<sup>136</sup> Out of three Gohains, Bargohains, Buragohain and Barpatra Gohain, one was made Prime Minister or *Rajmantri* who possessed some extra privileges.<sup>137</sup> The *Rajmantri* supervised and scrutinised the work of subordinate officers so that it might be free from mistakes and tamperings.<sup>138</sup> When Atan Buragohain became *Rajmantri*, under his supervision the *Bahgariya Buragohain Buranji* was compiled.<sup>139</sup>

Again in the reign of Sivasimha, one Manohar Bailing Phukan, in obedience to the mandate of the monarch, compiled a 'roopoot' under the supervision of the *Rajmantri*.<sup>140</sup> Numali Bargohain, the youngest son of Lathepena Bargohain, compiled the *Cakari Pheti Buranji* which created much sensation among the Ahoms. This chronicle was full of predilections, jealousies and party leanings. At that time Numali Bargohain was *Rajmantri*. In this capacity he compiled this chronicle. Kirtichandra, the then Barbarua, was one of the victims of *Cakari Pheti Buranji*. From the reign of Rajesvarasimha the portfolio of royal historiography was transferred to the Barbarua from the *Rajmantri*. Thus we find two Assamese chronicles compiled by Sri Nath Barbarua and Radhanath Barbarua. But the Ciring Phukan was still superintendent for the department of chronicles both in Ahom and Assamese.<sup>141</sup> At first the persons selected from the Ciring clan were appointed as scribes for the Ahom chronicles and a new *khel*, a sub-division of guild of people, was established to work as scribe in Assamese. This *khel* came to be called *lekharu*.<sup>142</sup> Now, therefore, the department of historiography consisted of a group of *lekharus*, with a

Deodhai Phukan, a Deodhai Barua and a Bahung Phukan at the head for collecting materials and writing the chronicles. Citing Phukan remained in charge for supervision of the whole work of the department. Ultimately, however, the whole process of work in the department had to have the approval of the *Raj-mantri* or Barbatua who took care that the writing did not show any bias or contain any incorrect information.

## XVI

Dr. Grierson says "The Ahoms have left at least two important legacies to Assam, the sense of the importance of history and the system of administration." Again he stresses "The remarkable series of historical works which formed the glory of Assamese literature is no doubt due to the influence of the Ahoms."

The Ahoms belonged to the Mao Shan group of great Tai race and the Tais possessed a very old and advanced culture. At first the Tais lived in the valleys of China and they were predominantly agricultural people.<sup>141</sup> Their culture was established not later than 2500 years before Christ.<sup>142</sup> After that the Lung Shan culture flourished for a few centuries in China. It was a synthesis of Yao and Tai cultures.<sup>143</sup> When Shan culture was at the zenith in China, a group of Tai people migrated towards the south and settled there for some hundred years with their rich culture.<sup>144</sup> That was a tradition of the Tais who looked for a fresh and fertile land to establish a new kingdom. As a result, they came down from South China and founded the empire of Nan chao in the sixth century A.D.<sup>145</sup> But in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries they were divided into five groups and occupied a large part of South East Asia.

The Ahoms entered Assam with a distinguished culture. They carried with them their old religion, traditions, dress and customs, and their individualised script, literature and language too.<sup>146</sup> They were habituated to the writing of books and preservation of manuscripts. The persons accompanying Sukapha brought to Assam chronicles and scriptures.<sup>147</sup> Thus the origin

of the writing of *Purāṇa* was inseparably connected with the Shan immigrants.

## XVII

The famous Shan States named Mao Lung mentioned in the Assamese chronicles as Mao Lung established by Khyantayappa were inhabited by the Lai Mao Shan group. They were very akin to the Ahoms. They had also three guilds of scholars known as Gang Mong or Ga Mun. The Mohans and Deodhans of Mao Lung guided all religious activities of the people and the Wa Lungs or Bailungs were engaged in the writing of holy books or chronicles.<sup>101</sup> The Tais of Mao Lung were very much advanced in art, culture, astrology, religion and literature.<sup>102</sup> They kept regularly records of their historical events and composed chronicles. When Kirtichandra Barbaran was harassed by Nongva Baragohain through his cousin Phak Baran, the Barbaran sent some persons to the Shan States of Mao Lung to bring original Shan chronicles in order to prove a clean ancestry for himself.<sup>103</sup>

In the reign of Gaurmathisinha (1780-95) a commission of Naga astronomers and other learned persons was deputed to Myanmar to examine the histories of their race in possession of the Shan Buddhist priests of that place and to verify the books or traditions brought into the country by Chan ka pha (Chan ka pha). The examination completed, the commission rewrote the Ahom history in Assamese and extended it backwards from Sam Lung pha conquest of Assam to the founding of the first Ahom capital on the "Iweli river". The late Kirpanath Phukan, an indigenous chronicler of Assam collected a voluminous work known as *Imak buran* from the Shan State of Northern Burma. Punvavanta Phrag (a) refers to his *Imak buran* that he has gone through a great number of Shan chronicles which deal with the history of the Lai group. The historiography of Assam had its original inspiration from the State of Mao Lung and is genealogically and materially connected with the Mao Shan chronicles.





- <sup>24</sup> George Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> S. K. Bhuyan, *Studies in the Literature of Assam*, p. 33.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> *S.A.B.*, ed. SKB, p. 3; *D.A.B.*, ed. SKB, p. 90; Ms. 3, f.3, Ms. No. 5, f (tarpara ahi Nam-kiu par hai Kham-jang palehi, tate manuh lekhi cale, maril tini kuri, satjan haral, pache rajadewe bole 'ji mare jak pao batat ji katha hay, pandite likhi thaba).
- <sup>29</sup> G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Preface, p. 1.
- <sup>40</sup> H. C. Goswami, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Assamese Manuscript*, pp. 44-45.
- <sup>41</sup> G. C. Barua, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-23.
- <sup>42</sup> E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, p. 74.
- <sup>43</sup> *Din Buranji* = History of the earth; *din* = the earth; *Deo Buranji* = History of the heavenly bodies; *deo* = a god.
- <sup>44</sup> *Bu-lan-ci* = *bu* = ignorant; *lan* = of former times, a grandson; *ci* = a letter, a paper, a document.
- <sup>45</sup> *Bu-lan-ji* = *bu* = ignorant; *lan* = grandson; *ji* = grannery.
- <sup>46</sup> *Pu-lan-ci* = *pu* = grandfather; *lan* = grandson; *ci* = a document.
- <sup>47</sup> S. K. Bhuyan, *Annals of the Delhi Badshahatc*, pp. 30-31.
- <sup>48</sup> *Lai-lik* = Tai, *lai* = great, stout; *lik* = a book, paper.
- <sup>49</sup> P. Gohain published a piece of poetic writing in the *BAHI*, Saka 1852, Month Oct., pp. 345-346. This piece is a translation from some *lai-lik buranji*.
- <sup>50</sup> Late Kripanath Phukan collected a Shan chronicle from North Burma. He has shown me the manuscript and named it *lai-lik buranji*.
- <sup>51</sup> *Lit.*, Tai *u* = a holy book, a document.
- <sup>52</sup> S. K. Bhuyan, *Lachit Barphukan and His Times*, p. 220.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ru-put*, Tai *ru* = instruction; *put* = record, document.
- <sup>54</sup> *S.A.B.*, ed. SKB, p. 1.
- <sup>55</sup> Ms. No. 3, f. 1.
- <sup>56</sup> *U-kut*, Tai *u* = straight; *kut* = to seize, to keep.
- <sup>57</sup> *An Account of Assam*, p. 2.
- <sup>58</sup> *A. B. SM*, ed. SKB, Introduction, p. xxxvii.
- <sup>59</sup> Wade, *An Account of Assam*, p. 2.
- <sup>60</sup> *D.A.B.*, ed. SKB, Introduction, pp. x-xi.
- <sup>61</sup> *S.A.B.*, ed. SKB, p. 1.
- <sup>62</sup> S. K. Bhuyan, *Atan Buragohain and His Times*, p. 353.
- <sup>63</sup> A manuscript and a transcript copy of the real *Cakari Pheti Buranji* are found in the family of Numali Bargohain at Maduri, Sibsagar.
- <sup>64</sup> *Tu-ku-lai*, Tai *tu* = ignorant; *ku* = torch; *lai* = a book.
- <sup>65</sup> *T. B.*, ed. SKB, Introduction, p. viii.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- <sup>67</sup> *D.A.B.*, ed. SKB, p. 96.
- <sup>68</sup> *S.A.B.*, ed. SKB, p. 1, Ms. No. 3, f. 1.

- 69 S. K. Bhuyan, *Atan Buragohain and His Times*, p. 326.
- 70 A. B., ed. SKD., p. 61, 1a Ms. No. 7, f. 1.
- 71 T. B., ed. SKB, p. 1.
- 72 P. N. Bose, *The Indian Colony of Siam*, p. 6.
- 73 D. G. E. Hall, *Historians of South East Asia*, pp. 52-53, 85-87.
- 74 D. R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, Part I, pp. 21-22.
- 75 D. G. E. Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
- 76 P. N. Bose, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- 77 D. G. E. Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
- 78 *Ibid.*, Introduction, p. 3.
- 79 *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.
- 80 B. D. Sanwal, *Nepal and the East India Company*, p. 23.
- 81 *Medieval History of Nepal*, p. 5.
- 82 Preface, p. v.
- 83 D. R. Regmi, *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 21.
- 84 M. Neog, *Asamiya Sahityar Ruprekha*, pp. 250-251 ; Amanatulla Ahmed, *Kocbiharer Itihasa*, pp. 14-18.
- 85 M. Neog, *op. cit.*, p. 210.
- 86 *Ibid.*, p. 212.
- 87 *Ibid.*
- 88 *Ibid.*, p. 213.
- 89 *Ibid.*
- 90 *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 282.
- 91 Ram Rai, *Gurutila*, p. 63, v. 338.
- 92 M. Neog (ed.), *Bhagavata Katha*, Introduction, p. 15.
- 93 H. C. Barua, *Hema Kosa*, p. 149.
- 94 A. B., ed. SKD., p. 1.
- 95 D.A.B., ed. SKB., p. 183 ; Ms. No. 4, f. 2.
- 96 Ms. No. 4, f. 9.
- 97 D.A.B., ed. SKB., p. 173.
- 98 Ms. No. 4, f. 4.
- 99 D.A.B., ed. SKB, p. 204.
- 100 *Ibid.*, p. 227.
- 101 S. K. Bhuyan, *Atan Buragohain and His Times*, p. 350.
- 102 P. B., ed. SKB, p. 91 ; Benudhar Sarma, *Ramdhenu*, Vol. XVIII, No. V, p. 48.
- 103 T.P.B., ed. SKB, p. 1.
- 104 B. K. Barua, *History of Assamese Literature*, p. 68.
- 105 D.A.B., ed. SKB, p. 213. The prose style of the chronicle in the Deodhai Asam Buranji is not similar to that of other common chronicles. It takes the style of Bhattadeva's prose.
- 106 Ms. No. 1.
- 107 A Gohain, 'Deodhai Siksa Pranali', *BHAI*, Vol. XXII, No. 1, p. 7.
- 108 Deodhai, *Tai Deo* = a god ; *Mo-cam* = *mo* = scholar.
- 109 Bailungs are also known as Mo-Plang in Ahom. Mo-Plang, *Tai*

*mo* = scholar ; *plang* = a priest.

<sup>110</sup> *Mo-hung*, Tai *mo* = scholar ; *hung* = celebrated, fame.

<sup>111</sup> *D.A.B.*, ed. SKB, p. 6.

<sup>112</sup> Ciring, Tai *ci* = a document, paper ; *ring* = to register, a list.

<sup>113</sup> Ms. No. 1, f 818.

<sup>114</sup> Ms. No. 1, f 882.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 818.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> A Gohain, 'Deodhai Siksa Pranali', *BHAI*, Vol. XXII, No. 1.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *I.B.*, ed. SKB, pp. 173, 175.

<sup>120</sup> *An Account of Assam*, p. xxxiii.

<sup>121</sup> Hamilton, *An Account of Assam*, p. 18 ; Martin, *North Eastern India*, p. 614.

<sup>122</sup> S. K. Bhuyan, *Ahomar Din*, p. 32.

<sup>123</sup> *A.B.*, *KTP.*, p. 58 ; *A.B.*, ed. GCB., p. 385.

<sup>124</sup> Ms. No. 1, p. 531.

<sup>125</sup> *A.B.*, *KTP.*, p. 1.

<sup>126</sup> J. P. Wade, *An Account of Assam*, p. xxxiv.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *A.B.*, *KTP.*, p. 1.

<sup>129</sup> Ms. No. 1, p. 820.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 833.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 821.

<sup>136</sup> *A.B.*, *SM*, ed. SKB, Introduction (Dr. Bhuyan states that the department of historiography was under the control of Bargohai).

<sup>137</sup> *S.A.B.*, ed. SKB, p. 199.

<sup>138</sup> *A.B.*, ed. SKB, Introduction, p. xxxviii.

<sup>139</sup> S. K. Bhuyan, *Atan Buragohain and His Times*, pp. 321-337.

<sup>140</sup> J. P. Wade, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>141</sup> Lila Gogoi, *Ahom Jati aru Asamiya Sanskriti*, p. 2.

<sup>142</sup> S. K. Bhuyan, *Studies in the Literature of Assam*, p. 33 (Likha kar Barua was Superintendent of the army of scribes).

<sup>143</sup> Wolferm Eberhard, *History of China*, p. 8.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>145</sup> Lila Gogoi, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>146</sup> Wolferm Eberhard, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>147</sup> H. C. Goswami, *BAHI*, Vol. XVIII, No. VI (The Tais of China are known as Mao-Shan).

<sup>148</sup> E. Gait, *A History of Assam*.

<sup>149</sup> S. K. Bhuyan, *Atan Buragohain and His Times*, p. 236.

- <sup>150</sup> P. Buragohain, *Ahamar Adi Buranji*, pp. 20-21.  
<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.  
<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.  
<sup>153</sup> *BAHI*, Vol. XIX, No. IV.  
<sup>154</sup> Ney Elias, *Introductory Sketch of the History of the Shans*, quoted in J. G. Scott's *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Vol. I, pp. 214-215.







"In another trial, eleven tea-garden coolies, all Mundas, recruited from Chotanagpur, were accused of murdering a woman by beating her to death. They all pleaded guilty. In evidence, it transpired that, sometime before the murder, the accused persons had complained to the tea-garden manager that the woman was a witch, and was causing illness and death among them. The manager told them not to talk nonsense, and took no further action. So they dealt with the witch according to their own customary law."

Referring to the Hindu-Muslim relations, he writes :

"To whatever caste or tribe a Hindu villager belonged, he detested the Muslims. These were mostly found in Lower Assam, where they had immigrated in large numbers, from Mymensing district in Bengal."

Mr. Martin also recorded his observations on the European clubs in Dibrugarh and Jorhat. He says :

"At each of these places there was a European club, of which most of the members were tea-planters living in widely scattered places. Consequently, there was a great influx in the clubs at weekends. In addition, tea-planters used to give tennis parties, to which friends were invited from far and near. A certain proficiency in tennis was useful in such society, and by constant practice, both my wife and I became moderately skilful at the game."

Dr. N. L. Bor was the Director of Relief Measures in Assam. His "Report of Relief Measures in Assam", covering forty-seven sheets, gives details of the condition of the refugees from Burma during the Japanese campaign of 1944 and the assistance to the homeless rendered by the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, the local staff, the Indian Tea Association and the Burma Refugee Organisation. He also appreciates the loyalty of the Nagas to the British Government and their services to the Government during the Japanese invasion. To quote him :

"The Japanese and Indian traitors tried hard but failed completely in their attempts to win over the Nagas. Many prisoners, both Japanese and Indian, were taken and not a few knocked on the head, speared or shot. Many acts of

bravery were performed by Nagas and our Intelligence was well served by volunteers who penetrated the Japanese lines and brought back valuable information. In their hatred of the Japanese, the Nagas went so far as to give information to our troops which they knew must mean the destruction of their property. In several cases the inhabitants of a village laid down signals which indicated to our aircraft that the village was occupied by the Japanese troops. The bombing which followed meant the inevitable destruction of the village."

He attributes the loyalty of the Nagas to the pacifying policy of the British officers, and writes :

"This extraordinary and spontaneous display of loyalty is a very striking commentary upon the wisdom of the policy which had governed our dealings with the hill tribes of Assam. The Government of Assam have always had the good fortune to have had at their disposal officers of strong personality who have been able to gain the confidence and respect of the hillmen."

Like Mr. Martin, Dr. Bor also refers to the social life of the European community in Assam and the European clubs. He writes :

"Dibrugarh Club was the biggest and liveliest of the social clubs. The climate in Upper Assam is moist and very suitable for the cultivation of good lawns. Consequently, the tennis courts at Dibrugarh were superb."

His observation on the men-women relationship in the Dibrugarh Club is indeed interesting :

"The club was remarkable, too, in another respect. It was essentially a place where men could get together, and gossip at the bar. So, ordinarily, ladies were not allowed into the main building, and never into the bar. They had to sit all by themselves in a roomy and comfortable annexe, where they chatted quietly in small groups, or read magazine in a corner. . . . Meanwhile, the fun in the bar would grow fast and furious. It was easy to see that the women would have enjoyed the men's company, but the men had not come to the club for that ; women's place, in their views, was the home."

Although Dr. Bor's description of the Dibrugarh Club projects it as very much un-European, Mr. Martin said that he and his wife played tennis in the club's courts. Dr. Bor in his private papers also mentions about the scenic beauty and social life of Shillong. To quote him,

"Visiting Shillong was the best trip of all, especially the time when I sent up my pony Peter, and could ride among the pine trees. The Shillong races, like Darjeeling and Dacca races, were great social occasions, for Indians and Europeans alike."

Sir Charles Pawsey was the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills district during the transfer of power. The Pawsey papers also include a note by Dr. J. P. Mills, the celebrated author of *The Ao Nagas* and other monographs, then Adviser to the Governor of Assam for Tribal Areas and States, on 1 August, 1944, to Charles Pawsey on an old file dealing with the First Siege of Kohima in 1879-80. Access to the six boxes of the Pawsey Papers is, however, restricted. Similar restriction has been imposed on the Parry Papers. The latter include the memoir of Mrs. Parry, the wife of N. E. Parry who was a district officer in Assam in the 1920s and 30s. N. E. Parry is the author of *The Lakhes* and few other monographs and had in the 1930s submitted a number of notes and memoranda to the Government on the future status of the hill areas of Assam.

Another district officer-cum-anthropologist, whose private papers have been obtained by the Cambridge South Asia Archives, is Dr. J. H. Hutton. He was the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills for a long time, and his well-known monographs include *The Angami Nagas* and the *Sema Nagas*. His private papers contain his tour diaries in the Naga Hills, Khasi Hills and Lushai Hills and elaborate notes on the customs and usages of the hill people. It is important to note that his private papers offer information on the Angamis and Semas in addition to what he had used in the monographs.

The Hutton Papers also include the private notes and diaries of another scholar-administrator, Keith Cantlie, who was the Deputy Commissioner of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills and the author

of *Notes on Khasi Law*. The voluminous Hutton Papers have been given to the Archives by Mrs. M. M. Hutton, wife of Dr. Hutton, and there is no restriction on their consultation and use.

It is interesting to note that the wives of some of the European civilians, who in the European way accompanied their husbands on official tours through difficult terrain and odd circumstances, maintained regular diaries and notes on their experiences. Like Mrs. Parry, Mrs. A. W. Taylor, the wife of the Civil Surgeon of Manipur, has left behind for inquisitive historians diaries of her tours in the Assam Hills in 1936-37 and in Cachar and Manipur in 1937-42. These diaries give us useful information about local customs and usages, economic conditions, agriculture and industry, settlement of disputes, powers and functions of the tribal chiefs, fares and festivals, and social relations. The diary of a nine-day tour among the Thangkul Nagas records her impressions about the geographical features of this region, the life-style of the people, and the description of a Manipuri festival which she attended in 1937. Her diary of a tour in Cachar in 1941-42, around Maduramukh where the river Rupa meets the Diyung, is important for the notes on the people, their language and social attitude, and the economic products of the area. She claims to be the first European lady to visit that part of Cachar, and she noticed the curiosity of the local women about the costume of a foreigner of their sex.

Lady Beatrix Scott was, however, a civil servant herself. She rose to the rank of the Political Under Secretary to the Government of Assam, while her husband, Sir Walter Scott, became the Excise Commissioner. An important part of her autobiographical account, the 'Indian Panorama' (manuscript), written in 1951, deals with her experiences in Cachar where her husband was the Settlement Officer in 1916-18. She says :

"Cachar ... was in some way a very interesting place. Part of the district lay in the hills, but these were not affected by the re-settlement. Silchar itself was not looked with favour by our officials. It was said to be the hottest station in Assam, and I think it was true."

Describing Silchar, she says :

"Immediately round the town lay rice fields and villages, but within a few miles were the first tea gardens."

She has also given her impression of the planter community in Cachar, and quoted some letters from the planters to prove her husband's standing with them. She says her husband had some tough time with the planters, because as the Settlement Officer, he had close dealings with their tea estates. She, however, observes :

"In any case the planters were very generous . . . ; many a basket of luscious pine-apples, rosy lichis, and beautiful English vegetables and flowers has come in to me from the tea gardens around and I have pleasant grateful memories of the happy life I lived among my planter friends."

The Scott Papers are important for understanding the attitude of the planters towards the local people and the Government, and their role in a colonial economy.

G. P. Stewart was the son-in-law of Sir and Lady Walter Scott. He visited Assam in 1941 with his wife, Elizabeth Stewart. The two boxes of Stewart Papers are useful materials on the political, social and economic conditions of Manipur and Assam. The Stewart Papers also include twenty-four letters written by Mrs. Elizabeth Stewart to her parents from Manipur. In these letters, she has described her experiences in Manipur, the social system and attitude of the Manipuris towards the foreigners, and the natural beauty of the Manipur Valley and of the hills around.

It is interesting to note that Mrs. Stewart felt that the Second World War had brought Manipur into prominence and accelerated the process of development in the state. Notes on the war in Manipur, its early history, bombing of Imphal, civilian relations with the army and the economic conditions of Manipur are also found in the private papers of C. Gimson of the Indian Civil Service, who was the British Resident in Manipur during the Second World War. Referring to the settlement of disputes among the hill people, Gimson writes :

"In December 1941 I went on tour in the hills to meet the



Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills district (Burma), at Somra, a village near the Manipur-Burma boundary. These Border Meetings were a regular institution at which we disposed of disputes between hillmen who lived on opposite sides of the Border. They had no legal sanction but served a very useful purpose because the litigants were satisfied that justice had been done when the two sahibs, sitting together, passed an agreed order. Chiefs and litigants came from villages up to seven or eight days' march away and the meeting provided a grand social occasion for the hillmen as well as impartial justice."

About the Japanese campaign he says :

"In the beginning of December 1943 we suffered a sad tragedy. T. A. Sharpe, I.C.S., flew up from Silchar to prepare plans in consultation with IV Corps HQ. for a screen of scouts (local Nagas) in the hill between Cachar and Manipur. He had been President of the Darbar until a few months before and was delighted to be back in his old haunts. He arranged with IV Corps to visit Tamenglong, a subdivisional HQ., four days' march through the hills to the west of Imphal, for consultation with the Subdivisional Officer about the appointment of scouts. Alas, he started one day too late and was captured by a Jap patrol which had just crossed the Tamenglong bridge path. We never learnt exactly what happened to him ; but it is fairly certain that he was killed by the Japs near Haochong, where they killed several Gurkhas and men of the Indian Army. His body was never found."

Gimson also recorded his impression about the economic transition in Manipur. To quote him :

"You can imagine the effect of the influx of money on the economy of the state. Because of its isolation Manipur had been greatly independent economically. The people grew their own food and cotton and silk, made their own clothes and provided their own entertainments. Food was plentiful, money scarce and prices low. Then came the army with fabulous amount of money, wanting to buy everything....



Wages rose from Rs. 4/- to Rs. 5/- a day, rice from 1-5-a sack (sic) to Rs. 40/- or even 60/-, and other things in proportion."

The Gimson Papers also include the manuscript of a paper on land settlement in Assam, read by him in the Leicester Library and Philosophical Society on 10 October, 1955.

The Thomson Papers are of educational importance. Dr. David Thomson was in the Assam Educational Service from 1911 to 1933. He was the Inspector of Schools in both Assam and Surma Valleys, Principal of Cotton College (Gauhati) and Murarichand College (Sylhet), and finally, D.P.I., Assam. His private papers include the Journal kept by him in Assam from 11 March, 1911, to 9 November, 1923, as Inspector of Schools and the Principal's diary of Murarichand College from 12 November, 1923, to 5 January, 1926, containing an account of daily happenings, comments on the students and Hindu customs and usages. His son, Dr. A. M. Thomson (a Professor in the University of New Castle since 1968), was born at Shillong on 20 September, 1920, and had his schooling in the former capital town of Assam. The latter also maintained diaries during his younger days in Assam. His comments on the freedom struggle in India are of great interest to researchers in the history of our freedom movement, although several eye-brows are bound to be raised at some of his observations. To illustrate :

"But Gandhi was not a fighting man at heart but a lawyer —was sometimes a lawyer and sometimes a holy man, a curious blend of the two as a matter of fact."

## II

The private papers of the non-officials are no less interesting. V. C. Whyte was a tea-planter and belonged to the famous Assam Company. He encamped in Manipur and Naga Hills during March-May, 1942, to organise relief measures on behalf of the Indian Tea Association. Besides describing the condition of the Burmese refugees and the nature of relief extended to the

evacuees, the Whyte Papers contain interesting notes, comments and criticisms of the evacuation schemes of the Government.

Similar informations are found in the Lingeman Papers, A. B.A. in History from Oxford, Paul Lingeman was appointed by the Burmah Oil Company as an Office Assistant in 1921, but ultimately rose to the position of the General Manager of the Company in the East in 1945. His private papers include notes on his career in Burma and Assam oil fields in 1921-28 and Chittagong, in 1929. In the latter place, he became popular among the Indian elite by fighting for the admission of the Indian members to the European Club. He was in Chittagong during the historic Armoury Raid, and his notes are as useful as primary material. His notes on the Trade Unions in Assam are more interesting. He has practically maintained a manual of the labour movements and a graphic account of the famous labour strike in Upper Assam in which the Oil Company's establishments were worst affected. He ascribes the success of the Trade Unionists to administrative failures, and the administrative failures to the official policy of discrediting the popular ministry. To quote him :

"During that general strike of 1939, the Government of Assam was in the hands of a British Governor who had to rule through a popularly elected ministry, with an overriding policy directive to 'let the minister make his own mistakes'. (That was the directive which shaped the morale of the I.C.S. through its later years). The ministry at that time was Congress... so was incapable of making up its mind to preserve law and order in the oil fields or anywhere else. So we were left. However, with the declaration of war we emerged."

### III

The foregoing discussion is intended to impress upon the historians of North-East India the usefulness of the unused private papers in the custody of the Cambridge South Asia Archives. The descriptions and extracts are, of course, sketchy

compared to the volume of the papers, and might not be enough to illustrate the significance of the materials. Although the importance of the private papers in understanding the true character of the British Rule in India is being gradually appreciated by the professional historians, the works on North East India that have so far been published are mostly based on the official records preserved in various archives. The official proceedings contain the official version of the happenings, and the historian working on a problem has to read in between the lines with his historical imagination which makes his task more difficult.

The private papers of a Government servant, on the other hand, are the notes and diaries and correspondences written in his individual capacity, free from any protocol, while the non-officials represent more non-partisan views. The private papers are complementary to the official records, and trustworthy, being the manual of one's own experiences, and make room for cross fertilisation. There is, indeed, enough scope to use the private papers of the officials and the non-officials who worked in Assam and the adjoining areas during the colonial period for reconstructing the modern history of the north-eastern sentinel of India, particularly in its social and economic aspects. In fine, the author is thankful to the authorities of the Cambridge South Asia Archives for allowing him access to the private papers in their collection, and seeks to share his appreciation of the source-value of these materials with fellow historians.

# SOURCE OF MODERN ASSAM HISTORY

DR. HAMLET BAREH

*(North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong)*

## I

THE TASK of reconstruction of the history of modern Assam becomes much easier because of the availability of sources. These sources prolific in volume are available in the State and National Archives in the form of reports.

The modern period of Assam history may be placed between 1826 and 1972, on which date the final reorganisation of Assam took place. In fact, the consolidation of the region took place slowly and continued through the long period of British rule, until India's attainment of independence. It is true that the British administrators were confronted with immense difficulties owing to opposition from the tribes, while they also experienced problems inherent in an attempt to introduce a uniform administration and code of law. The records indicate that the Government had to use both diplomatic and punitive measures to effect a series of administrative changes, and at times, were at a loss to formulate definite policies to coerce the tribes and attain their objective.

Modern history, based on official sources, has, however, to be scientifically oriented, so that the whole socio-economic structure receives adequate attention. History has to be interpreted in terms of the nation, rather than of kings and chiefs. The study should take into account different spheres of national activity.

The sources have a bearing upon a wide range of subjects. The early records indicate that the local Government more than

any other agency, had indeed laid down the foundation of administration by forming suitable policies. In most cases, policies recommended by them were finally accepted by the Supreme Government. Certain inaccuracies are noted in the records since, in all cases, the official interpretation was not correct. In many cases the records tend to become one-sided, because they make certain omissions and thus fail to be true to the theme. They are also silent on some events of local history, and thus fail to give a true picture of the internal history of Assam so far as the indigenous people are concerned.

Much is represented according to the whims or experiences of the local administrators whose views were not properly substantiated, and for which, they depended mostly on the opinion of the local interpreters. Such an one-sided picture is likely to hinder our historical conception. Moreover, the early records lay emphasis on tactics used by the local administrators to influence or pressurise the Supreme Government upon whom the latter depended for policy-decision in respect of this vast frontier with its own peculiar and diverse conditions. Much that was done was at the instance of the local officialdom; hardly do we find any instance of an inquiry being conducted by the Government to justify their action.

A degree of inconsistency is also noted. The records in several instances do not agree with the local tradition, and other corroborative evidence is often lacking. Many emergency measures were adopted sometimes without making a careful investigation of the situation, and they established wrong and unhealthy precedents. Thus, for instance, the report of Hamilton as appearing in an *Account of Assam*, prepared during the years 1807-14, is largely a misrepresentation of historical facts, as the author wrongly identified the Khasis with the Garos, whereas, in fact, these two peoples have different social and cultural systems, political institutions and historical background. His report could further imply that the Garos, instead of the Khasis, actually occupied and ruled over certain tracts in lower Assam. The report is misleading because it says that "the Rajah of Jaintiya is by birth a Garo", and that "in their succession the Jaintiya Rajah retains the customs of the Garos" (pp. 184-5 and 30, 31). The



fact was that it was not the Garo but the Khasi law of succession that was followed. The inquiry, based on hearsay, tends to be both misleading and hypothetical.

In emphasising upon freedom movements, all that was reported to the Government was motivated by official exigency alone; the records, therefore, do not provide a clear-cut picture of the people organised for the movements, their grievances, antagonisms and sentiments with regard to the phases or effects of the new arrangements aimed at consolidation of authority, especially during the early period. For instance, David Scott, a distinguished architect of the British empire in the north-eastern region, never attributed the movements to any defective policy of the Government, but always laid the blame on the people upon whom such defective arrangements were being imposed or sought to be imposed. Possibly he did not care to take note of the public opinion and of the other factors that could lead to an organised movement.

The tradition has it, on the other hand, that Tirot Singh declared war upon the East India Company because David Scott himself never respected his own word of honour, because he broke the pledge made for the restoration of the plains of the Nongkhlaw kingdom to Tirot Singh, and provided help to Tirot Singh's enemy, thus violating the treaty concluded with the people of Nongkhlaw in 1826. Tirot Singh's launching of a war from 1829 to 1833 was, in fact, a diplomatic struggle with Scott rather than with the Government, and during Scott's lifetime Tirot Singh was never subjugated. He exerted pressure only after Scott had made known his intention for the subjugation of the hills by enforcing the policy of divide and rule, by winning allies through making attractive offers, by enforcing economic blockade of the hills, by exacting large tributes from Tirot Singh's counter-parts, by confiscating partly the dominions of his allies and by burning the recalcitrant villages to the ground.

On the other hand, Scott never tells us how trick or treason was used to reduce the powerful allies of Tirot Singh, such as U Bor Manik of Shillong who, after being invited to armistice negotiation was handcuffed and thrown into prison, and later



released only after he had signed a treaty dictated by Scott and after hostages had been taken from his family. This report never came from Scott but was discovered from a parallel record.

In this manner history has been distorted in official records, and in order to get a correct picture of the developments taking place during this period we have also to make use of local traditions and non-official sources.

Inaccuracies have further been noted in respect of nomenclature. The nomenclature used by the early English administrators, owing to the new process of Anglicisation, is not consistent with the local usage, so that several place-names were both misspelt and wrongly pronounced. Some place-names have become so remote that it is difficult to locate them properly. A lot, therefore, has to be done to evaluate, collate and compare the documents by making use of a local dictionary. Information should also be collected from the elderly persons and by comparing old and new maps. The problem of identification poses serious difficulties to researchers in ancient history but the task becomes comparatively easier in the modern period because of so many links.

## II

There are several literary sources other than official records, and we may utilise them for reconstructing the history of this period. Oral information, however, becomes dependable only when we have other corroborative data to substantiate it. Antiquarian remains, properly deciphered, could also help us to obtain glimpses of the transitional trends.

About literary sources, apart from the Government records, we find that the Ahom *buranjis* could really be of immense help to reconstruct the history of the pre-British period. They would be of help also for comparative evaluation with other records of the corresponding period. In most cases, the authority of the *buranjis* appears to be undisputed. However in matters relating to the Khasis and the Jaintias some anomalies have been detected.

The early Government records which depend on the *buranjis* so far as this area of studies is concerned also, give a wrong picture. This is because the *buranjis* give a wrong picture of the Jaintia genealogy and of the law of succession which is matrilineal and not patrilineal.

The *buranjis* are silent on some events, recounted frequently in local tradition. They do not state the conditions in the Jaintia portion of Bangladesh, whereas, at times, they contain interesting information about the northern sector of the Jaintia region comprising Nowgong and Kamrup. The *buranjis* are also silent on social conditions. The relations between the Khasi kings and the Ahoms are not vividly described in the *buranjis*. In matters relating to Assam, on the other hand, the account of the *buranjis* may be accepted as genuine. For instance, the *Tungkhungia Buranji* and the *Anglo-Assamese Relations* of Dr. S. K. Bhuyan are acclaimed to be among the best historical works. Dr. Bhuyan reconstructed his work with the help of both British official documents and the evidence of the *buranjis*.

### III

A mass of Thai documents in their original condition have been found. The Thais are represented by the Ahoms, the Noras, the Khamptis, the Phakials and the Tuirungs, most of whom live in Upper Assam and eastern Arunachal. In certain cases, they serve as regular chronicles recording events of daily importance. The Ahom court, since the inception of this kingdom, used professional scribes to record important incidents. This helped to record a connected account, during the medieval period, of the Ahom kings, their activities, wars, conquests and defeats, reception of foreign envoys, and contemporary social and economic conditions. The Thai script was used for some generations before Ahom was replaced by Assamese as the court language. The switch-over to Assamese also saw a cultural transformation which, in turn, led to the evolution of Vaishnavite movements. They wrote on a paper prepared from a bark which, when processed out, polished and dyed, served to preserve the

writing for a long time. A special ink and papyrus were also used. This tradition obtained not only among the kings but also among the common people. Dr. G. Gogoi in his *Thai Kingdom* has made use of such tradition extant.

The Buddhist Thais are different from the Ahoms. Khampti literature provides us with a mass of information on the history of Buddhism, and the Buddhist system of monastic education. A large number of Thais have the Jataka stories recited and read in the community. Old men still adhere to this tradition, and write down important events of their times as a hobby. These writings serve as family and community records.

Some of the *buranjis* have been rendered into English, but a mass is yet to be transliterated. It is understood that the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Records is now engaged in this task. It is hoped that a bulk of them, when translated into Assamese and also English, could be of great help in discovering many things yet unknown. Those which have appeared so far are mainly Assamese translations, but a portion has come out also in English. Those which will come out in course of time will throw light not only on political history, but also on the life and thought of the people.

Monba, Monpa and Khamba in Arunachal are in the Tibetan script, and they throw light on Buddhist monastic education. This script was also used in the inscriptions recorded by the people.

Various traditions recount that many tribes at one time or other possessed a script of their own. The Nagas, the Khasis and the Kukis still preserve such traditions. The Khasis ascribe the loss of their ancient script to a deluge. The Nagas say that their forefathers wrote on the skins of animals, but that the script was destroyed by their tame animals.

Prior to the advent of the British the Khasi kings used the scripts of their neighbours, such as Persian, Bengali and Assamese. They needed to keep the records in view of their large kingdoms where people belonging to various communities and speaking diverse languages lived. Special tutors were appointed and many princes learnt to read and write in these

scripts. A number of records written in an archaic form of Bengali are found in the offices of the Deputy Commissioner, Shillong, the Assam Secretariat record room and other archives. But it is regrettable that because of the obsolete language used, they could not be deciphered, and therefore are not helpful for historical reconstruction. Besides cannons with Persian characters have been found in Jaintia, one of them bearing the name of *Sher Shah*, which, the tradition has it, were captured from the Muslims during their invasion of Assam. I have noted a letter from the last Jaintia king, Rajendra, to the British Government (with an English translation) which has a bearing on Rajendra's commitment to assist the British Government to subjugate the sepoy mutiny in Hindustan, and which requests the British Government to provide him with necessary equipment, guns and weapons and also steamers for transport. His proposal was turned down. This happened twenty years after his dethronement as the king, and after the British Government had annexed his territory both in the hills and the plains.

The records available in the above scripts, however, suggest that the people were prone to keep certain records on very important affairs concerning revenue, demarcation, and court cases which had special reference to their dominions in the plains. Acquaintance with the neighbouring villages led the Serampore Baptist Mission to undertake the translation of the Bible into Khasi in the Bengali alphabet in 1813. As a result, the gospel according to St. Mathew was printed in 1816-17. The Mission record thus reads : "By 1817 a few Khasi St. Mathews had been distributed to those Khasis living nearest to Bengal and who could read and write in the Bengali alphabet." The work of translation continued, and in 1831, a New Testament in Khasi came out in print. The text is, however, unintelligible to the average reader to-day. It is not known in what dialect the translation was done, but it must be one of the southern dialects. Later on they switched over to the Roman alphabet and the Bengali letters were abandoned. The Assamese, on the other hand, could claim to have a more prolific source-material derived both from Assamese and its Thai counter-part. The study of hieroglyph to trace the original scripts in different languages

could be of great help for reconstruction work. The classification of the source-material available in Sanskritic proto-types, Thai, Austric and others could provide some incentive to the study of historiography.

The study of Assam's history is yet incomplete. Much remains to be done to throw light on migration problems, urbanisation, industrialisation, land problems, labour trends and other aspects of social and economic history. The past is being forgotten too soon, and links are being severed from traditional cultural usages and art forms which were prevalent only fifty years ago. For instance, in certain areas, the shape, size and contents of traditional weapons, furniture, pottery, ornaments and other things are being rapidly forgotten owing to quick social and technological changes. It will take time and a lot of energy to reinstate them in their proper places. During the long years of British rule, several other remains, such as sculptures, stone monuments and wood-carvings have fallen into disrepair and many have been defaced.

#### IV

So far, a bulk of Government records have been utilised for the reconstruction of Assam's political history. A series of published works have been made available from time to time. Professor H. K. Barpujari's *Problem of the Hill Tribes* (Volumes I and II) and *Assam in the Days of the Company*, Nirode Kumar Barooah's *David Scott*, and others are consistent with the official records and are considered to be original works. The vast mass of records as yet unexplored, indicate that a lot could still be done to cover other areas. Records could also be found on subjects other than general history. In spite of their inaccuracies, the records, vast and varied in form, contents and themes, are guidelines not only to administrative history but also to other aspects of national life. The real problem before an inquisitive or genuine scholar is how to find out corroborative evidence from other sources. The records show us the way in



which peoples with diverse ethnic, cultural, social and economic backgrounds were brought under a single administration to help the process of British consolidation,—a development which had a bearing upon the succeeding generations.

The Government records, in spite of certain irregularities, have certainly been of great service in reconstructing from the scratch the modern history of Assam. History, as gleaned from them, helps us to understand better the past of the people of the North-east frontier.

The classification of the records has been done at different levels, and there are also archivist's guidelines for the selection of records according to the subject which a research scholar has undertaken to investigate. From a layman's point of view, we find that records concerned with administration contain more detailed information than those concerning agriculture, industry, health, etc. Court cases and judicial proceedings are also very helpful. The records throw light on the making of policy decisions at different levels. They explain why protection was extended to different tribes in the matter of inner line regulation and has the status of different Khasi states (such as Semi-Independent and Dependent) was determined. The early records of the exploratory and punitive expeditions provide glimpses of the people, their land, laws, customs, institutions, cultural aspects and other traits. Some of these records relating to the earliest expeditions have been published.

The revenue and land records contain much information about tenure, holdings, sources of revenue, the system of collection extant and other details.

The administrative records have bearing on day-to-day administration, and serialise important events which had certain repercussions on the administration. The records, in particular, lay emphasis on administrative discipline and norms which the contemporary administrators were prone to maintain.

Court cases in many instances are interesting, but the interpretation of law sometimes forms a good precedent and sometimes a bad one. The codification of local customary laws seems to be therefore essential. The judicial proceedings, such as could be collected, might be of immense usefulness.



The legislative reports provide good material for the writing of constitutional history. They also have bearing upon public reaction to some of the Government policies.

The records throw much light on the development of education, agriculture, forest, industries, boundary demarcation, PWD, elections, municipal administration, and such other things. In certain matters, such as acquisition of lands, boundary arrangement, carving out of forest reserves, the Government decisions did not serve as healthy precedents. Some subjects like education and such other social problems do not appear to have received proper attention from the Government, and we have scant references to these in the records. If some one wants to throw light on these subjects, he has to consult other sources.

Newspapers, in addition, could provide very useful data for reconstructing the history of recent times. They indicate public response and reaction to official policy and assess important popular movements. Newspapers which are organs of political parties may not, however, be always dependable. Even then a careful perusal of their contents will be helpful to the research scholar.

Economic history could largely be reconstructed from the documents obtained from the Chambers of Commerce, and the records of firms, companies and entrepreneurs. Trade, commerce and industry are subjects of great dimensions. Growth of big cities and commercial and industrial centres is to be studied from these records.

## V

Though we now possess an authentic account of the history of medieval Assam because of the availability of daily accounts prepared by the court scribes, much has yet to be done to present a detailed account of the history of the modern period.

Among other developments, it is heartening to learn that the Department of Assam's political history, Assam Government, will soon be releasing a second volume of political history which will focus our attention on some aspects of the non-cooperation

movement and other issues. Obviously this will be a new contribution to the history of modern Assam.

While there is ample scope for preparing a political history, the writing of a socio-economic history of Assam is, on the other hand, a paramount need today. The matter becomes difficult because most of the records and archival collections are silent on socio-economic trends.

Socio-economic and cultural changes that have taken place in Assam in recent times are of absorbing interest. There have been changes in taste, interest and temperament, in house and furniture pattern, food and drink habits, dress and ornament pattern, agricultural and economic enterprises, art forms, theatre and screen, modes of conveyance, and other things. This change is largely evolutionary, and dependent upon several factors, such as the spread of education, advent of science and technology, urbanisation and industrialisation, and political events like partition.

The task of historical reconstruction is immense. The records have to be analysed with regard to their utility, scope and perspective; their critical review is therefore of immense importance. As regards other sources, mostly sculptural and antiquarian remains, more exploration is necessary. Some of the ancient tribal stone monuments have been taken as Hindu motifs. Amongst the tribals, the history of art, particularly of music, folklore, dance, and sculpture, is a great attraction. The study of the growth and progress of journalism is also a desideratum.

# SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF MODERN ASSAM

DR. V. VENKATA RAO  
(Gauhati University)

## I

THE WATERSHED between medieval and modern Assam is the Treaty of Yandaboo of 1826 when the annexation of North East India by the British began. There is plenty of material for the construction of the history of modern Assam, rather of North East India. Unfortunately, the Government of the day did not realise the importance of historiography and therefore, the records were not properly maintained. Several of them have faded away, completely, some are fading, while others are becoming brittle. An attempt has been made to prepare copies of the records which are fading, but the arrangements made till now are hardly satisfactory. Further, the copies of the records are in loose sheets, written in bad handwriting with a number of gaps.

The records available for consultation by research scholars may be broadly classified into two parts, public and private.

The public records are those maintained by the Central and State Governments and local authorities including the district offices. All Governments in North East India have their own archives, popularly known as Record Office, with a Keeper of Records who has been trained in the maintenance of records. The records in the State archives are available to bonafide research workers. But there are certain limitations in this regard. The first limitation is that only those records which are forty or more years old are available for consultation. Records marked as 'secret' are not available for consultation to research scholars. With the previous permission of the Government, records which

are thirty years old may be made available for consultation. Even the secret records may be consulted with the previous permission of the Government. Second, confidential records are not available for consultation.

Records available for consultation by research scholars may again broadly divided into two categories, namely, pre-1874 and post-1874 records. The pre-1874 records may be further divided into five categories :

- (i) records received from the Government of Bengal,
- (ii) records received from the Board of Revenue, Bengal,
- (iii) records received from the Commissioner of Cooch Behar relating to Goalpara,
- (iv) records received from the Commissioner of Dacca relating to the Hill areas which were transferred to the administrative control of Assam, and finally
- (v) records received from the Commissioner of Assam, popularly known as the Commissioner's Files.

In this connection it may be said that not all records relating to Assam were transferred by the Bengal Government. As a matter of fact, however both the Government of Bengal and the Board of Revenue transferred only some records, and others are still in the Bengal Archives. But the Bengal Government permits all bonafide scholars to consult these records. Of the pre-1874 records, the Assam Commissioner's files are the most important.

The records received from the Assam Commissioner are not maintained subject-wise or department-wise. They are arranged chronologically and they may be divided into several categories, e.g., letters received from the Government of Bengal, letters issued to the Government of Bengal, rough drafts of the letters issued to the Government of Bengal, letters received from the Board of Revenue, letters issued to the Board of Revenue, letters received from the District Officers, and letters issued to the District Officers and finally letters received from the Miscellaneous Quarters and the letters issued to the Miscellaneous Quarters.

There are also bound volumes containing Circular letters

received from the Government of Bengal and Circular letters issued to the District Officers.

There are also bound volumes containing the rules framed by the Government from time to time for the administration of the Province.

Besides letters issued to the Government of Bengal there are Foreign Proceedings which deal with the Hill Tribes and the Government's relations with them. The Foreign Proceedings also deal with the annexation of the tribal areas by the British, the formation of the Hill districts, like the Naga Hills district, the Lushai Hills district and the North East Frontier Tracts. A study of the Foreign Proceedings is indispensable for the construction of history of the Hill districts. But I must say regretfully that some unscrupulous research workers have stolen some portions of these proceedings. Still there are several letters received and issued to the political officers, and they furnish details of the annexation of tribal areas. They also indicate the kind of relationship that existed between the Government and the Tribal Chiefs.

Besides the records which are in the Assam and Bengal Archives, there are the Gazettes. The Calcutta Gazette contains not only rules and regulations issued by the Government, but also the proceedings of the Bengal Legislative Council. The Calcutta Gazette also enables us to know when particular institutions came into being, like the offices of the Commissioner, Extra Assistant Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner.

Again, there are valuable reports which throw a flood of light on the history of Assam, rather the history of North East India. For instance, the two valuable reports by Moffat Mill, one on Assam and another on Cassiahs (Khasis) and Allen's Report on the Hill Tribes, give an account of the state of affairs in the province.

Besides these special reports, there are annual reports issued by the Government. The annual reports are of two kinds, one dealing with particular departments and the other with general administration. Besides the annual reports, there are also reports prepared annually by the Deputy Commissioners on the admini-

stration of the districts. The annual reports from the District Officers in charge of the Hill districts contain valuable information.

Besides these original sources, there are some publications by some of the officers of the Provincial Government. They describe the state of affairs in North East India. We may mention, for instance, (a) Robinson's *The Descriptive Account of Assam*, (b) Hamilton's *An Account of Assam*, and (c) Wade's *An Account of Assam*.

Of the pre-1874 records, the most important source is the *Letters Issued to the Government*. These letters contain very valuable information on important subjects. There are seventy-one volumes of *Letters Issued to the Government*. Of these letters, those written by Henry Hopkinson, the Commissioner of Assam for one full decade are important. They are of immense interest to students of past politics. The letters issued to the Government contain the entire material relating to the language controversy in modern Assam. Portions of some letters have been lost. All the letters have been printed and bound in one volume. This volume is of 93 pages, each page containing 74 lines and each line containing 19 words. Those who are interested in the linguistic conflicts in North East India will be rewarded if they consult this single volume. It is true that some of the earlier letters relating to this subject have not been included in this volume. Perhaps the person who was directed to collect all the letters relating to the subject had no patience to do so. The collection of material for any subject from these volumes is like searching for a hairpin in a haystack.

It is true that some letters are not included in this volume but they are included in Mill's Report on Assam. That Report also must be consulted in order to have a comprehensive idea of the question. The Records indicate that it was not the local people who took a keen interest in this matter. It was the American Baptist Missionaries who took the lead in this matter. We are greatly indebted to the American Baptist Missionaries for adopting a strictly rational attitude in this matter.

A close study of the *Letters to the Government* indicates that



there were acute differences of opinion on this subject among the officers of the Government. They also indicate that though all these officers belonged to the Army, they made a thorough study of the problem. They also indicate that all officers, whatever might have been their position in the official hierarchy, expressed their views freely and fearlessly. Let me quote some of the views expressed by these officers. Col. Henry Hopkinson, the Commissioner of Assam, wrote :

"I think the outcry against Bengali as the language of the courts and schools of Assam is not well founded. Its use leads to no practical difficulty and any attempt to substitute the so-called Assamese language in its stead would only tend to cause very great confusion. With one exception all the vakils of my court are Assamese and they are about thirty in number and I recently issued a circular letter to some of the most intelligent among them enquiring if they met with any difficulty in carrying out their duties owing to the use of the present style of court language. All of them have reported that they have experienced no such difficulty and some of them have expressed to me their fear that they would be ruined if the so-called Assamese was introduced as they did not know it and would have to go to school again in their old age."

But Capt. A. N. Philip, an Assistant Commissioner, refuted the arguments of Col. Hopkinson. Philip wrote :

"I do not think Bengali ought to be retained either as the court language or as the school language in Assam for I believe the difference between it and Assamese to be so wide and so essential as to make the two languages for all practical purposes almost as distinct, one from another as are English and French. Before concluding I would just remark that Bengali is not entitled to the least favour on the ground of its supplying us with legal and technical equivalents which Assamese could not supply, for well nigh all the equivalents of this kind which it possesses, it has borrowed with a good deal more from Persian and Arabic."

It is not necessary to quote further in this issue. All that I

should like to emphasise is that the *Letters to the Government* is a mine of information, and a serious research scholar must consult them. The language controversy went for nearly four decades, and it is still going on. The ultimate triumph of Assamese was due to the strictly rational attitude adopted by the officers.

Again, if any one wants to study the social, economic and political conditions of North East India, he must consult the *Letters Issued to the Government*. If we want to know the state of education, elementary, secondary and higher, we must consult these *Letters*. The *Letters* also indicate the economic and social conditions of Assam in the early part of the last century. In 1861, the Bengal Government requested the Commissioner of Assam to suggest places where the new Municipal Act could be introduced. The letters written by Col. Hopkinson are of interest in this connection. Col. Hopkinson wrote,

"It appears to me that the social condition of Assam is not sufficiently advanced for the introduction of municipal government, fully or partially, in any shape, on any terms."

But the Bengal Government told Hopkinson that it would "not spend public money for the conservancy improvement or watching of any town or station when a law existed under which the inhabitants can be compelled to make provision for their local wants themselves."

But Col. Hopkinson asserted that "Gauhati is nothing but a permanent camp of Government Officers, whose butlers and followers constitute the towns people", and that therefore the the Municipal Act should not be introduced. But the Government of Bengal said that should not be the reason for not introducing the Municipal Act in Gauhati. Laying stress on a wider principle, the Government said :

"As a matter of policy it is very desirable to encourage in the residents of towns, a habit of local self-government and of relying upon their own exertions and resources instead of looking to the Government and its officers for help which cannot properly be given."

Therefore Hopkinson was requested to reconsider the matter.

Hopkinson replied :

"As I have maintained on previous occasions, there are no places in Assam rising to the consideration of towns. Such places as Gauhati, Dibrugarh or Tezpur are merely villages used as centres for the policing of the surrounding country. We have not only no places in Assam which would rank in importance with Rangoon, Moulmain, Akyab but even with such second and third rate or fourth rate towns as Ramree, Promé, and others I would name in British Burmah. The resources of Tezpur were found to be insufficient lately to provide a dinner for the officer commanding the station, not that we require anything out of the way but the bazar would not furnish fish or fowl or butcher's meat of any kind. In Gauhati, there is not a carpenter's shop nor a boat-builder nor a mason nor a tanner nor a shoe-maker. The bulk of the population of Gauhati are out in the field cutting and bringing in their rice."

This debate indicates the state of Assam a hundred years ago. A historian who desires to write on the social and economic history of modern Assam should consult the *Letters*. I need not quote any further to prove my point that the *Letters* are an authentic and indispensable source of the history of modern Assam.

Similarly, the records of the pre-1874 period furnish a very interesting account of the origin of tea plantation for which Assam is world famous. The discovery of the leaf, the person who discovered it, the various methods adopted for the promotion of tea industry, and the condition of labour in the tea-estates have been discussed in the pre-1874 records.

Finally, the records of the pre-1874 period also indicate the policy of the Government towards the hill tribes, frequent changes in that policy, the formation of the Inner line and the philosophy of the Inner line. Students of historical materialism may jump to the conclusion that it was the economic factor that induced the British to subjugate and annex the hill areas. A close study of the records of the period, however, indicates

that it was not the imperialistic policy that induced the British to annex these territories. There was no scope for the appropriation of the surplus value of the areas. On the other hand, the British had to spend vast sums of money and employ a large number of men for the administration of these areas. Thus, the pre-1874 records are of great value to the historian of modern Assam. So far they have not been made use of to a considerable extent. Even Gait did not consult these records, though he was a pioneer in historical research on North East India.

The post-1874 records have been preserved well. They may be classified into 'A' and 'B' files. Normally the 'B' files are destroyed after a period of three years. Only 'A' files are preserved. But the classification of files into 'A' and 'B' is arbitrary. Sometimes some of the 'B' files also contain valuable material. Though rules were laid down as to which files should be considered as 'A' files and which as 'B' files, the officer entrusted with this task imagined that some records were not of importance. Hence some of the useful records have also been destroyed.

The post-1874 records are maintained department-wise and chronologically. Many of the 'A' files have been printed and they are in English. There is an index for every year and it is very easy to locate the material on any subject.

Besides these archival records, the research worker may have to consult the proceedings of the legislatures, Imperial and Provincial. They enable us to understand the mind of the legislators. It is from these proceedings that we can grasp the issues of conflict between the two valleys, Assam and Surma. The Assamese demanded a separate university and a separate high court for Assam. The Surma valley people always opposed these demands. The idea that Assam should have a separate university of its own was first suggested by P. R. T. Gurdon in the Imperial Legislative Council. This was a reaction to the resolution moved by Surendranath Banerjea in the Imperial Legislative Council that the Calcutta University must be under the control of the Bengal Government. Similarly, the demand of the Sylhet Bengalis for separation from Assam can be understood only from the proceedings of the Assam Legislative Council.

Besides the proceedings of the legislatures, there are administrative reports issued by individual departments and also the general administration report. The pre-1947 administrative reports were informative. Unfortunately, after 1947, the departments have not issued annual reports. Some departments have no doubt prepared reports, but irregularly. As a matter of fact, there are no administrative reports, general or departmental since 1950. The Administrative Reforms Committee, Assam, recommended to the Government that they should issue the annual administrative reports regularly, but with no effect.

Another source for the reconstruction of the modern history of Assam is the correspondence between the leader of the Majority Party and the Governor, between the Governor and the Governor-General and Viceroy of India, and also between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India, as regards the formation of the Provincial Government. These letters are not in the State Archives. They are in scattered places, and are not easily available to the research scholars. But they are a very valuable source of information for the history of Assam. They indicate the partiality of the Governor towards particular politicians, the role of the Governor in the formation of Governments, the part played by the planters in the making of governments, and the struggle for power among the politicians. These letters should be studied along with the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly.

## II

Another source of information is the private papers. Some of the politicians have maintained files of their own. Omeo Kumar Das maintained an account of the activities of several politicians of Assam. Bimala Prasad Chaliha had a file of his own. It contained the correspondence between himself and the Prime Minister, and the Home Minister with regard to the formation of Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya. He was kind enough to show me his personal file.



Similarly, D. D. Nichols Roy, the General Secretary of the APHLC, had also a file containing the correspondences between the APHLC and the Government of India. The former Speaker of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, R. S. Lyngdoh, had a good collection of material on tribal politics. It is from these sources that I was able to obtain valuable material for writing my work entitled *A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India*.

Another source of information is the proceedings of the local authorities, like the municipal boards, local boards and the district councils in the autonomous districts. All the local authorities have minute books which contain the decisions of the local authorities on different issues.

Besides the local authorities there are the political parties, both national and regional. Not all the political parties have maintained records of their activities. The Congress has done that, and it has a number of files. First, it has a file of circular letters received from the AICC. These circular letters contain the directions given by the AICC from time to time. They contain the principles to be observed in the selection of candidates to contest general elections, the allotment of seats among the several communities, particularly the Muslims, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and the procedure to be adopted in the selection of candidates. The Proceedings of the Selection Committee contain the decisions of the committee on the selection of candidates. A critical mind can easily find out why a particular person was nominated. They also indicate the extent to which the principles laid down by the AICC for the selection of candidates have been observed, and also where they have not been observed. When I was going through the proceedings of the selection committee I came across an interesting event. The selection committee noted, "X is an unscrupulous corrupt politician. But he alone can win the election." Since winning the election was very important, the selection committee nominated him and he won the election. The applications received from the candidates indicate their egoism and their aims and aspirations. I do not know whether the leftist parties have maintained records of their activities. It appears that they adopt informal



methods in the selection of candidates. However, I was informed by them that they do not maintain records.

Another source of information is newspapers, particularly the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Statesman* and *The Assam Tribune*. But they are not always reliable. Sometimes the reports contained in these papers are exaggerated, and sometimes they do not publish news of certain types. However, a critical mind can easily find out the reliability of news.

Another source of information is observation. This source must be coupled with oral history of which we shall make a note later on. Any one who desires to note social changes that have taken place in any community and the reasons for such changes must adopt this method. But the observer must have an understanding of the community. He must not judge things from his own experience and knowledge. For instance, he should not import his conception of morality. A person who lives in the plains has one conception of morality, and the hill people have a different conception of morality. A citizen of the plains should judge things from the point of view of the tribals when he writes about them. One of my research scholars worked on Ramoës, a small tribe in the Subansiri district in Arunachal Pradesh. He had a perfect understanding of the Ramoës, and therefore was able to prepare a first-rate thesis. It is based entirely on observation. It is one of the best theses written by an Indian, according to Professor Hamendorf, an internationally known anthropologist. Even then the presentation shows scope for improvement in so far as expression is concerned. The author does not use the correct anthropological terms. But the more important point is whether the material collected as a result of close observation is valid or not. The anthropologists are very particular about the use of technical terms. One needs to remember that this method of observation is very costly in terms of time, money and effort. But there is no other method by which we can understand social changes.

### III

The last important source of the modern history of Assam is oral history. It is not a very dependable source. There are various limitations so far as this method is concerned.

First, the person whom you are interviewing may not deliberately lie, but he may not also speak the truth, or he may speak in a round about way. Once I was interviewing a person and asked him "What do you think of the Chairman of the Municipal Board?" After two minutes' silence he simply said "He constructed a beautiful house", thereby implying that he was a corrupt man. On another occasion I was interviewing an old gentleman, a poet of some repute, about the Assamese-Bengali conflict. He flatly denied the existence of any conflict, though this conflict is as old as the annexation of Assam by the British.

Sometimes certain events puzzle one. When I was collecting material on the District Council in the North Cachar Hills District at Hailong, I came across an interesting incident. One of the members of the North Cachar Hills District Council moved a motion of no confidence against the Chief Executive Member. The motion was carried and the Chief Executive Member resigned. Two days later the same member proposed the name of the same person for the office of the Chief Executive Member. In the first instance, he condemned the Chief Executive Member, and in the second he praised him to the skies. I was puzzled, and I asked several persons in the office about the strange behaviour of this member. Every one smiled, but none would give out the reason. One person at last promised to tell me the truth, provided I would not reveal the source from which I got the information, and I got it.

Thus oral history is sometimes indispensable. But it has its limitations. First, the person who is being interviewed may be too old to remember all things. Secondly, he may be reluctant to speak the truth because he may be offending his neighbours thereby. Thirdly, he may be prejudiced. Therefore oral history is not entirely reliable, but if the research worker is intelligent, he can easily discriminate between what is real and what is unreal.

The historians of North East India have not made use of the material to the extent to which they should have done. Most of them do not know where the state archive is located. Some research scholars have made use of the material to write their doctoral theses, but once they have earned their degrees, they have not made use of the archives again.

The following subjects have been investigated with a view to earning the degree of Doctor of Philosophy :

1. Local Finance in Assam
2. Origin and History of the Khasis
3. Land Reforms in Assam since Independence
4. The English and the Garos
5. The Manipur Administration from 1709 to 1907
6. The Assam Legislative Assembly from 1937 to 1962
7. The Problems of Labour in Assam from 1826 to 1901
8. The British Relations with Manipur from 1824 to 1891
9. The Anglo-Naga Relations
10. The Naga Polity
11. The Administration of Jails in Assam from 1874 to 1947
12. A Hundred Years of Local Self-Government in Assam
13. A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India
14. The Role of the Chancellor in University Administration (based on the correspondence between the Chancellor and the Universities)
15. The Development of Municipal Self-Government in Gauhati
16. The Development of Municipal Government in Assam
17. The Development of Secondary Education in Assam
18. The Police Administration in Assam from 1874 to 1947
19. The Assam Secretariat from 1874 to 1947
20. The Assam Public Service Commission from 1937 to 1972
21. The Progress of Women's Education in Assam from 1874 to 1974
22. The History of Education in Assam from 1826 to 1919
23. Library Legislation in India
24. The Assam Secretariat from 1874 to 1947
25. The Problem of Defence in North East India

26. The Development of Social and Political Institutions in the Garo Hills
27. The Revenue Administration in Assam from 1874 to 1920
28. The Government and Politics in Meghalaya
29. The Working of the Sixth Schedule in Assam
30. The Administration of Panchayats in Assam with special reference to Kamrup district
31. Personnel Administration in Tea Industry
32. The Chief Commissionership of Assam from 1874 to 1920
33. The Garos and the English.

This list is not complete. It does not include the list of subjects investigated by research scholars from Dibrugarh University. Besides these subjects which have been already investigated, the following subjects are under investigation.

1. The Anglo-Khasi Relations from 1826 to 1847
2. The Syiemship
3. The Administrative Development in Assam
4. A Century of Administrative Development in Arunachal Pradesh
5. Government and Politics in Nagaland
6. Government and Politics in Mizoram
7. Government and Politics in Tripura
8. Government and Politics in Manipur
9. A Century of Government and Politics in North East India
10. The Deputy Commissioner—evolution of the office
11. The Board of Revenue in Assam
12. The Governor of Assam
13. The working of Dyarchy in Assam
14. Provincial Autonomy in Assam
15. The Working of the Committee System in the Assam Legislative Assembly
16. The Working of the District Council of the Khasi Hills
17. A Century of Elementary Education in Assam
18. A Century of Higher Education in Assam.

The material for all these theses is being collected in the Assam Record Room. Besides these subjects, a number of scholars are working on the history of different Churches in North East India. Historical research has thus made some progress in Assam. But sound historical research requires committed scholars, and unfortunately, we do not have them in sufficient numbers. This is the greatest obstacle in the way of historical research.

## 2 • Sikkim





## ***Ancient Period***

# SOURCES OF THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF SIKKIM

DR. N. N. BHATTACHARYYA

*(University of Calcutta)*

## I

SIKKIM lies, between lat.  $27^{\circ}9'$  and  $27^{\circ}58'N$ . and long.  $88^{\circ}4'$  and  $89^{\circ}E$ . About 2818 square mile or 7289 square km in area, it is bounded on the north and north-east by Tibet, on the south-east by Bhutan, on the south by Darjeeling and on the west by Nepal. Sikkim is populated by the tribals, the original inhabitants being the Lepchas. The language they use is also known as Lepcha. It is a polished language having a script of its own which is said to have been invented by King Chagdor Namgyal. Though not in modern sense, Lepcha literature is rich for its variety of contents. Apart from folklore, mythology, law and customs, and ancient traditions, which are really valuable as sources for the reconstruction of the social, political and cultural history of Sikkim, the Lepcha language contains a few historical texts adopted from Tibetan sources. Although these works deal with legendary-history, their importance and significance cannot at all be underestimated.

The Lepchas, who call themselves Rong-pa or ravine folk and claim to be the autochthons of Sikkim proper, seem to have migrated from certain unidentified hilly localities to Dejong or Sikkim in the thirteenth century. Among other tribes settling in Sikkim reference may be made to the Bhutiyas belonging to the Rnyung-map, a sect of Mahayana, migrating from Kham in Tibet. They are of Tibetan origin who also spread at the same

time into Bhutan. Their language is a dialect of Tibetan. The Newars of Nepal subsequently settled in this region forming an important part of the populace of Sikkim. They are also locally known as Pahariyas. They are almost all Hindus by religion, with numerous castes, the few exceptions being the tribes coming from the north-east of Nepal, who still profess Buddhism.

The ruling family of Sikkim that became master of the territory in 1641 and introduced Lamaism claimed descent from one of the *gyalpas* or princelings of eastern Tibet. They came from Kham-Mina Andong, a small principality (which was subsequently occupied by the Chinese in 1732) where their ancestor, the great-great-grandson of the Tibetan King Ti-son-desen (A.D. 730), founded a small kingdom. Various scions of the family found their way back to Tibet where they rose to high positions. The erection of the four immense pillars of the great Sakya monastery of Tibet went to the credit of one of their descendants, Khye Bumsu, so powerful as he was styled 'stronger than 10,000', who subsequently migrated to Ha. His children crossed over to Sikkim and settled at Gangtok.

Penchoo Namgyal was the first *gyalpa* or king in whose reign Buddhism was introduced in Sikkim. In the time of the third *gyalpa*, Chagdor Sikkim was overrun by the Bhutanese under Deb Naku Zidar (1700-1706), but the Tibetans drove them out. During the reign of the sixth *gyalpa*, Tenzing Namgyal (1780-90), the Gorkhas of Nepal invaded Sikkim and seized Rubdentze. Part of Sikkim was occupied by Nepal. On the breaking out of the Anglo-Nepalese war in 1814, Major Latter occupied the Morang and formed an alliance with the Raja of Sikkim who was rewarded with the territory which had been ceded to the British by Nepal. In February 1835 Darjeeling was taken up by the British and in 1849 the lower course of the Tista and the Sikkimese Tarai were annexed to the British territory. The final Anglo-Sikkimese peace treaty was concluded in 1861, according to which Sikkim practically became a British protectorate. Sikkim was annexed to India in 1975 and since then it has been existing as one of the border states of India. This is in a nutshell all what we know about the political history of Sikkim.

## II

The credit of introducing Sikkim to the world and providing glimpses of Sikkimese life and culture goes to the Britishers. The first to write on Sikkim was A. Campbell, then Superintendent of Darjeeling, who published an article on Sikkim in the 29th issue of the Bengal Asiatic Society's Journal. But the credit of presenting Sikkim in its totality goes to his friend Dr. J. D. Hooker who did it in his *Himalayan Journals* which was published in two volumes from London in 1854. J. C. Gawler's *Sikkim with Hints on Mountains and Jungle Warfare* which was published in 1873, contains official reports of the British retaliations against Sikkim for purported kidnapping of British subjects inside British territory. Other works on Sikkim written in the nineteenth century include J. W. Edgar's *Report on a Visit to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier*, published from Calcutta in 1874, C. Macaulay's *Report on a Mission to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier*, published from Calcutta in 1885, and L. A. Waddel's *Among the Himalayas*, also published from Calcutta in 1899. The first *Gazetteer of Sikkim* was published from Calcutta in 1894. It is the only work in which we have a complete statistical account of all aspects of life of Sikkim, tribal life including physical features, population, social groups and organizations, norms and behaviours, economic and religious conditions and so forth.

More studies on Sikkim began to be published since the beginning of the present century. The major publications in this field included J. Claude White's *Sikkim and Bhutan* (Calcutta, 1909), L. S. S. O'Malley's *Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Sikkim* (Cambridge, 1917) and P. Brown's *Tombs in Sikkim* (Calcutta, 1917). C. V. Atchison's *Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sunnads relating to India and neighbouring countries*, published in the second decade of the present century, includes texts of three nineteenth-century treaties. Charles Bell's *Tibet Past and Present*, published in 1924, contains a discussion of Sikkim's history and politics, based on the report of a political officer in Sikkim. But all these works deal with modern Sikkim, i.e., Sikkim, after its contact with the Britishers.

## III

Since Sikkim was practically a no-man's land before the thirteenth century, the Sikkimese chronicles while dealing with the early history of the *gyalpas* depend squarely on the Tibetan sources to establish the link between the ruling dynasty of Sikkim and the lineage of the great Tibetan King Sron-tsan-gampo. Tibetan historical works belonging to the categories of antiquity (*gterma*), chronicles (*Lo-rgyus*), dynastic and family chronicles (*rGyal-rabs*, *Jo-rabs*, *gDun-rabs*), monastery-chronicles (*gDam-rabs*), histories of incarnations (*'Khruns-rabs*), chronological treatises (*bsTan-rtsis*), histories of religion or the doctrine (*Chos-'byun*), biographical literature (*rNam-thar*) and records of oral and written traditions (*rgyud-rim*) are regarded as authoritative by the Sikkimese and many of these works have Lepcha versions. Most of the Lepcha texts are as yet unpublished. Three such texts, belonging to the so-called *gter-ma* books or books from buried treasures (*gter-chos*) of the Tibetan tradition in Lepcha language had been edited, translated and published by A. Grunwedel as early as in 1896 under the title *Drei Leptscha Texte mit Auszugen aus dem Padma-than-yig und glossar* in T'oung Pao, Vol. VII, pp. 526-61. These texts based upon the Tibetan *Thain-yig-gser-phren* deal with the career and achievements of Padmasambhava, the semi-historical, semi-mythical founder of Lamaism.

Sikkim has recorded legal traditions in Tibetan as well as in Lepcha. It is believed that the Sikkim laws are founded on those spoken by Me-long-gdong who lived in hoary antiquity. These were written again by Kun-ga-gyal-tsan of Sa-kya-pa of the twelfth century and were known under the title *Tim-yik-shal-che-chu-sum* or *chu-dug*, available in two recensions, one containing thirteen laws and the other sixteen. These were subsequently revised by De-si-sangya Gya-tsho of the seventeenth century and came to be known as *Dang-shel-me-long-gnyer-gehic-pa*. The sixteen topics are: (1) general rules to be followed in time of war, (2) for those who are being defeated and cannot fight, (3) for officers and government servants, (4) law of evidence,

(5) grave offences, (6) fines inflicted for offences in order to make people remember, (7) law of imprisonment, (8) for offenders who refuse to come in an orderly has to be sent expressly to enquire about the case, (9) murder, (10) bloodshed, (11) for those who are false and avaricious the following oaths are required, (12) theft, (13) dispute between near relatives, (14) adultery, (15) law of contract, and (16) for uncivilized peoples.

Among Tibetan historical works and in their Lepcha versions there are some on the history of Buddhism in Sikkim. A list of such works has been given by Charles Bell in his *Religion of Tibet*, Oxford, 1931, pp. 213-15. It should be noted that all the big monasteries of Sikkim possess a copy of the two great lamaistic encyclopaedias, viz., *Kanjen* and the *Tanjur*. Each monastery also possesses one or more of the legendary accounts of the great saint of the Nyingmapa Lamas, viz., Lo-pon-Rimbochhe who is believed to have visited Sikkim and the works of Lha-tsun-Chhembo, the pioneer Lama of Sikkim, especially his *Neyik* or 'Story of the Sacred Sites of Sikkim' and his manual of worship of the great mountain god Kang-chhen-dsonga. Monasteries of Karmapa and Dukpa sects contain the 'Kargyupa Golden Rosary' and the *nam-thars* or biographies of the special Lama saints. Each monastery possesses a manuscript account of its own history (*deb-ther*). There are books on medicine and astrology. The Lepcha sacred books are generally translations or adopted versions from the Tibetan. The titles of the chief ones are *Tashi Sung* or the history of Guru Rimboche, *Guru Chho Wang*, a terton work on Tibet, *Sakun de-lok*, the narrative of a visit to Hades, *Ek doshi manlom*, forms of worship, etc.



## ***Medieval Period***

# NEW LIGHT ON SIKKIM FROM THE SOURCES OF ASSAM HISTORY

DR. N. N. ACHARYYA

(*Gauhati University*)

## I

SIKKIM, the youngest partner of Indian republic, plays an important role in the history of the Indian sub-continent. Situated in the eastern Himalayas, Sikkim is bounded in the north by the vast stretches of the Tibetan Plateau and to its west lies the kingdom of Nepal. In the east it is bounded by Bhutan and the Chumbi valley of Tibet. The main three communities in Sikkim are the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalese. The Lepchas, who call themselves 'Rong Pa' (Ravine Folks), are believed to have been the original inhabitants of Sikkim, where the Bhutias and the Nepalese have settled in the course of time. Though the Mahayana Buddhism is the state religion of Sikkim, the Sikkimese enjoy full freedom of worship. The principal languages of Sikkim are Bhutia, Nepali and Lepcha, but English is used extensively and officially for both internal and external communications.

Sikkim as a country is mentioned in the Assam Buranji in connection with describing the boundaries of the land of the Bhutia people.<sup>1</sup> Before it nobody had mentioned the name Sikkim in Assamese literature.

From the *Cooch Beharer Itihas* of Amanatulla we know that in ancient time Sikkim was known as Vijaypur Sikkim. We find the mention of the land of Sikkim in connection with its relations with neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, etc.<sup>2</sup>

In the year 1769 A.D. Dhairyendra Narayan (1765-1770 A.D.), king of Cooch Behar, fought a battle in Sikkim, being accompanied with Bhutan king Devayadhu. The latter occupied Sikkim in 1770 just before his attack on Cooch Behar in the same year. In 1788 the Nepal king attacked Sikkim. In 1863 there were many prisoners of war in Bhutan. In 1864 Dharma-raja (king) of Bhutan declared war against the Sikkim king.<sup>3</sup>

The lands which now comprise the district of Darjeeling once belonged to Sikkim.<sup>4</sup> Her eastern neighbour Bhutan gradually occupied her land east of the Tista since 1707. Her western neighbour is Nepal.<sup>5</sup> The Gurkhas after overrunning Nepal began to intrude into Sikkim's territory from 1780 and by 1813 the lands up to the west of the Tista including the present Siliguri Sub-division of Darjeeling district passed under Nepal's occupation. By 1814 the Rangpur district got Nepal and Bhutan as her northern neighbours.

From 1780 to 1786 raids were almost annually made by the Gurkhas of Nepal in Baikunthapur (in the present district of Jalpaiguri) on the plea that the foudar of Sikkim has taken refuge there. Owing to a variety of reasons war broke out between Nepal and the East India Company. The Company's forces expelled the Gurkhas from all the territories of Sikkim. The war ended in 1815 by the treaty of Segowli. Sikkim was made a buffer state between the Company's possessions in the south and Nepal and Bhutan in the north.

## II

In the history of ancient Assam we do not find the mention of the name Sikkim. On the other hand we have frequent references of Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal in ancient Kamarupi literature. As Bhutan was included within the boundary of ancient Kamarupa it had close relationship with Assam even in the days of the Ahoms. In the Indian language the word "Bhot" is generally meant for Tibet.<sup>6</sup> We know that the Bhutias, Lepchas (Sikkimese) and Nepalese, etc., were coming from Tibet. There-

fore it is not impossible to suppose that all these hilly tribes of the Himalayan Frontier were known as 'Bhot' to the Indians. Otherwise, it would be a matter of surprise that if Sikkim had been an independent kingdom at that time why it should have been omitted from the history while Bhutan had comprised a part of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa. We are therefore inclined to the view that it would be reasonable to suppose that for the purpose of acquainting ourselves with the history of ancient Sikkim and its relation with Kamarupa we have to study the relation of Kamarupa with the 'Bhots', that is the kingdom of Bhutan.

In the *Vishnu Purana* we find that the kingdom of Kamarupa included the whole of Eastern Bengal, Assam and Bhutan. According to the *Jogini Tantra* ancient Kamarupa included roughly the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, Rangpur, Cooch Behar, the north-east of Mymensingh and possibly the Garo hills. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang who came to Kamarupa in the seventh century A.D. also supported this view.<sup>7</sup>

The earliest inhabitants of Assam were the Kiratas, Cinas and other primitive tribes. The Kiratas who possess a tract of hilly country in the *Morung* to the west of Sikkim and situated between Nepal and Bhutan, appear to have been the descendants of the ancient Kiratas. Lassen takes them to belong to the Bhota tribes.<sup>8</sup>

The most important neighbour of Assam towards the north and the best known to the Europeans is what we call Bhutan, governed by temporals known by the title of the Deva (Deb) Raja.<sup>9</sup>

The government of Bhutan is said to be a theocracy, that is, headed by a person, who is considered as an incarnation of God, and who is called Dharma Raja. The Dharma Raja is a mere recluse monk, but his name only is used in the government.<sup>10</sup>

Beliefs constituted under the names of Vajrayana and Mantrayana, which grew up as a result of fusion of Hinduism and Buddhism, are taken by some scholars to have originated in Assam. From Assam these cults spread to places like Tibet. Bhutiyas (Buddhists of the neighbouring Bhota hills) even today come to Assam to worship the Hindu-Buddhist God Haya-

griva at the Madhava temple of Hajo.<sup>11</sup> The Bhoteas are Buddhists of the school of Sakya Singha, and admit the worship of Linga and of the Saktis.<sup>12</sup> As stated above, today the Mahayana Buddhism is the state religion of Sikkim, but the Sikkimese enjoy full freedom of worship. There are 67 monasteries, Scottish and Roman Catholic missions, a Hindu temple and a mosque in Sikkim.

The textile materials of Ancient Kamarupa, according to the *Kalika Purana*, are divided into four classes : Karpasa (cotton), Kambala (wool), Balka (bark) and Kosoja (silk from cocoons). Kambala was a texture of fine wools (sheeps' wool or goats' hair) ; most probably it was imported from Bhutan or Tibet. In the life of Hiuen Tsang, Bhaskaravarman is said to have made a gift of a cap to the pilgrim. It was called ho-la-li and was made out of coarse skin lined with soft down, and was designed "to protect the pilgrim from rain whilst on the road".<sup>13</sup>

Numerous passes and ways, known as Duars, still exist between Assam and Tibet through Bhutan. The *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* says that between Kamarupa and Tibet, there are thirty-five mountain passes through which horses are brought to Lakhnauti. Lieutenant Rutherford stated that the Khampha Bhoateas or Lhasa merchants just before the Burmese invasion had unreserved commercial intercourse with Assam. The commercial transaction between the two countries was carried out in the following manner : At a place called Chouna, two months' journey from Lhasa, on the confines of the two states, there was a mart and on the Assam side there was a similar mart at Gegunshur, at a distance of four miles from Chouna. An annual caravan would repair from Lhasa to China conducted by about twenty persons, conveying silver bullion to the amount of one lac of rupees, and a considerable quantity of rock salt, for sale to the Assam merchants ; the latter brought rice which was imported into Tibet from Assam in large quantities, besides Assam silk, iron, lac, other skins, buffalo horns, pearls, etc. Through Bhutan along the mountains there was also a trade route to Kabul. Tavernier mentions that in his time merchants travelled through Bhutan to Kabul to avoid paying the duty was levied on merchan-

dise passing into India via Gorakhpur.<sup>14</sup>

The basis of Assam's foreign relations was the remembrance of the limits of the ancient Hindu kingdom of Kamarupa bounded on the west by the Karatoya river, including roughly, the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, Rangpur and Behar. The Himalayan region of Bhutan and Tibet formed the northern boundary of Assam. The Bhutanese kept up their intercourse with the plains through the usual Duars of which there were eleven in Bengal and seven in Assam. The Bhutanese, like the Tibetans, sometimes invaded the frontier of Bengal and Assam. They would carry off men, women, children and goods and even a former Raja of Cooch Behar was one of their victims. Koch king Bisva Singha made a treaty with Deva Dharma, king of Bhutan. The former appointed in the frontier of his dominion officers known as Ujir, Laskar, Bhuyan and Barua to save the subjects of the bordering territory from the raids of the neighbouring peoples (Bhutiyas).<sup>15</sup>

The *Padshah Buranji* describes history of the conquest of Morang, (west of Sikkim) and Nepal by the Mughals in the first half of the seventeenth century. Detailed accounts of these two kingdoms are also mentioned in it.<sup>16</sup>

It is mentioned in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* that Ibrahim Khan Kakar, the Subadar of Kashmir, died in his expedition against the Raja of Tibet. He was an Afghan officer who was raised to the Mansab of 2,500 personnel and horse and was given the title of Dila-war Khan in recognition to his meritorious services. Jahangir pays many compliments to him in his *Tuzuk*.<sup>17</sup>

### III

It is mentioned in the *Kamrupar Buranji* that there is also a tradition in the country that a much greater portion of Kamrup formerly belonged to the Bhoteas. These Bhoteas were the Chinese people whose history claims conquests in this part of India, and who might naturally be confounded with the Bhoteas, from their impure feeding, and from having made their attack through the country of that people.<sup>18</sup>



In connection with the activities of the Bhoteas in Assam the *Kamrupar Buranji* mentions that the conversion of the kings of Assam to the doctrines of the Brahmans of Bengal, which happened soon after the overthrow of Meer Jumla, seems to have put total stop to their enterprise, and the petty chiefs who remained nominally under the authority of the Nawab of Rangamati, would have been entirely uninterrupted in cutting each other's throats and in reducing the country to a desert, had not they been assisted by the Bhoteas, who brought several of them under their authority, and continued advancing till the coming of the East India Company to Assam. A tolerably settled frontier has been obtained, there are some appearances of a regular government and cultivation is again beginning to revive, although it is still much retarded by the constant squabbles of the chiefs, and the liberty which they take of dictating to all who reside on their property.<sup>10</sup>

On the subject of the relation between Cooch Behar and Bhutan the *Kamrupar Buranji* records that the confusion that ensued in the Moghul government, secured the Vihar family from further encroachments on that side, but their reduced state now exposed them to the depredations of the Dev-Raja, who deprived them of one half of their remaining territories. The attack indeed was on the point of proving entirely ruinous when Dorpo Deo, the Raykot or hereditary minister having laid aside all regard to his duty, rebelled against his sovereign and kinsman. He entered into an alliance with the Deo Raja, and ceded to him a considerable portion of the Bottrishhazari (Baikunthapur), on condition of being supported in overthrowing the Raja, to whose title, there were, in fact, some objections. Having procured troops from Bhotan, he invaded Vihar. The Raja in despair applied for assistance to the Company, and to secure protection engaged to pay one-half of his revenue. Accordingly in 1772, Capt. Jones with a battalion of sepoys routed Dorpo Deo, who took refuge in Bhotan. Capt. Jones followed, and in 1773, took the fortress of Dalim Koth, on which the Deo Raja and Dorpo sued for peace. This was granted and the parts of Bottrishhazari that had not been ceded to Bhotan were restored to Dorpo but



he was reduced to the status of an ordinary zamindar, and a revenue was fixed on his lands, while he lost all authority in the remnant of Vihar, which does not now exceed one-third of its original dimensions and pays, as a tribute what is supposed to be one-half of its net revenue. In settling the frontier, great favour and leniency seem to have been shown to the Bhoteas, probably with a view to gaining their friendship in an expectation of commercial advantages that would appear to be chimerical.<sup>20</sup>

*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* refers in connection with Assam invasion of Malik Uzbeg in 1255 A.D. "that from the reign of Gushtasib, Shah of Ajam, who had invaded Chin, and had come towards Hindustan by that route (by way of Kamrud) of twelve hundred hoards of treasure all sealed, which were deposited there, and any portion of which wealth and treasures not one of the Raes had availed himself of, the whole fell into the hands of the Musalman troops. The reading of the Khutbah and Friday religious service were instituted in Kamrud, and signs of the people of Islam appeared there. But of what avail was all this from frenzy, he gave to the winds. For, the wise have said that the seeking to perform overmuch work hath never turned out fortunate for the Seeker".<sup>21</sup> The nearest route from Bengal which may have been followed for Chin invasion appears to be through Darjeeling and Sikkim. In 1337 Malik Khasru, nephew of Delhi Emperor Mohammad (Tughlaq) Shah, led an invasion to China. The route followed may also have been the same route mentioned above.<sup>22</sup>

During the rule of Durlabh Narayan (A.D. 1330-50), the mountain tribes of Bhutan made occasional raids in the north-eastern part of Kamrup; how the king drove them all away from his kingdom with the help of Chandibar is elaborately described in the *Guru Charitra*.<sup>23</sup>

There was close racial and cultural relations between the Boro Kacharis of Assam and the people of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet. The myths and legends of the Lepchas, Limbus, Dimasas, Meitheis and Tipras supply important source material in this connection.<sup>24</sup>

The *Rajopakhyān* records the detailed history of the rela-

tions between Cooch Behar and Bhutan from A.D. 1665 to A.D. 1794.<sup>25</sup>

#### IV

Assam is a land of various Mongolian people. Amongst them mention can be made of the Jangchas, the Khamtis, the Mishmis, the Singphaus, the Miyangs, the Padams, the Pachis, the Pangis, the Sirmangs, the Baris, the Asvings, the Karkos, the Tangams, the Gailongs, the Ramos, the Bokars, the Pailibos, the Membas, the Khambas, the Apatanis, the Hill-Miris, the Tagins, the Cherdukpens; the Monpas, the Chulungs, the Mijis, the Khoyas and the Bhutias, many of whom came to Assam through Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan.<sup>26</sup>

At the time (when Kheda operation—elephant catching—was going on in Khuntaghat) information was received that all the Paikpurs (Bhutias of the border) had assembled together and were planning to make a night attack. *Shitab Khan* (Mirza Nathan Alauddin Ispahani) sent a Koch messenger to them, saying "God forbid. But if my palis (guards of the Qamargah, i.e., Kheda) are disturbed, I shall give up the idea of catching elephant and taking all the soldiers of the Khuntaghat region (in Goalpara district) by the favour of God, I will pillage and burn up to Bhut (Bhutan hills) and will not leave even a bird of your race alive". The Paikpurs (Bhutias) sent one of their own men to the Khan with this message—"We are hill men. It is not easy to capture us. How will you be able to come to our hills? Therefore, if you give us presents, which are always given to us by the Rajas who come to capture elephants, we shall never create any trouble." Accordingly 10 jars of wine called Bakais, 50 pigs, 20 dogs and 50 maunds of rice were given to the Bhutias as presents. The Bhutias also sold Tangan horses, musk, ghazgha (a kind of mountain ox) and Bhut (blankets).<sup>27</sup>

The Duars through which the Bhutanese kept up their intercourse with the plains were normally the property of the Assam government but the Deva Dharma Rajas of Bhutan took posses-

sion of them in the eighteenth century and the feeble Ahom rulers of the time were hardly able to vindicate their claim. Complaints of oppression were raised from both territories and when the British occupied Assam in 1826 they found the Bhutan Duars to comprise "the most fruitful elements of future discord".

The government of the Ahoms had been compelled by circumstances to make over the Darrang and Kamrup Duars to Bhutan in consideration of an annual tribute consisting of Yak tails, ponies, musk, gold-dust, blankets and daggers, the total value of which was estimated at Rs. 4,785,00. The tax collectors of the two governments harassed the poor peasants of the intervening territory and these oppressions led to endless disputes between the frontier of the two states.<sup>28</sup>

The Bhutias of Kariapar Duar, known generally as Mombas, were governed by a council of chiefs designated as Sat Rajas. The entire Assam trade with Tibet passed through this Kariapar Duar. About the year 1820 the Lhasa merchants brought with them 70,000 rupees to buy Assam staples.

There are two other Duars known as Char Duar and Na Duar to the east of Kariapar Duar which were protected from the independent tribes of Bhutias and Daflas by the grant of concessions in the shape of blackmail.

At the time of the Burmese invasion and Moamaria rebellions the Bhutanese carried off to their hills a large number of Assamese subjects as slaves. These Duars also offered an asylum to Assam princes and potentates who rebelled against the Government.

The first formal embassy from Assam to Bhutan was despatched by Pratapballabh Barphukan in 1802, to adjust the mutual relations which had become strained on account of the shelter given to some Assamese nobles and princes by the Raja of Bhutan. The Assamese envoys returned in the company of thirty-six Bhutanese, who brought two epistles from the Deva Dharma Rajas of Bhutan, one written in Persian and the other in Bengali along with a large number of presents. The Bhutanese envoys complained to the Ahom monarch of the oppression committed near the borders by the officers of Kamarupa—the Bujar-baruas, Barkaiths and

Chaudhuris. They averred that the Bhutanese government had regularly delivered the stipulated articles, namely, musks, cow-tails, gold, ponies, blankets and chep-chongs or daggers at the passes fixed by the two states. The envoys also communicated the following message of the Deva-Dharma Rajas of Bhutan : "There had existed cordial and indissoluble friendship between the previous Swarga Maharajas (of Assam) and the ancient Deva-Dharma Rajas (of Bhutan), on the strength of verbal messages and communications, though unlinked by any physical sight. There had however been no exchange of embassies and epistles. Now, as commanded by the Swarga Maharaja, the Barphukan Barnabab of Barpani (Brahmaputra, i.e., Lower Assam) had despatched envoys and letters making enquiries about our prosperity and welfare. From this, the Deva Dharma Rajas have been convinced of the presence of inseparable ties of friendship. They have been exceedingly happy at the fulfilment of their heart's desire caused by the pleasure arising from personal sight. We *Jingkaps* have in consequence been sent by the Deva Dharma Rajas to enquire about the peace and happiness of the Swarga Maharaja. Our Rajas have also sent with us letters and presents."<sup>29</sup>

The task of protecting the Assam subjects from the inroads of the Bhutias devolved mainly upon the vassal Raja of Darrang. In 1805, the newly appointed Darrang Raja, Samudra Narayan, was instructed to "push back the Bhutias to their original limits", as reports had been received of the Bhutias' occupation of some portion of His Majesty's dominions by transgressing the old boundaries.<sup>30</sup>

We find in the census report of 1916 that the present name of the district of Darrang may have been borrowed from the Daffas or the Bhutias who called their Duars as Duar Ganga which after corruption to Duaranga may have assumed the present form of Darranga or Darrang. A similar pass to the west in the present Mangaldai subdivision along the course of the Rowta river which had a sacred lake or kund (now known as Bhairavi or Brahmakund) is still known as Darranga near Udalgiri.

Thus it is clear that from time immemorial Assam had close

relationship with the Bhots. The Sikkimese, though their name is not found in early Assamese literature, had most probably come to Assam as Bhots.

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## A COMMENT ON RONG CULTURE

P. B. CHAKRABARTY  
(*T. N. Academy, Gangtok*)

### I

THE STUDY of the cultural pattern of a primitive tribe suffers from two drawbacks, one inherent in the material, and one personal. The Rong folk (Lepchas) of Sikkim are a Mongoloid tribe inhabiting the southern slopes of the Himalayas. Because of difficult terrain and lack of good communication, precise information about this culture region is not available to a reasonable extent, and consequently many questions relating to the Rong cultural aspect, are at present unanswerable.

During my long stay in Sikkim for nearly thirty years, I trekked fairly extensively into northern and western regions of the state, partly out of an intense desire for hiking in remote mountains and partly out of a spontaneous zeal for studying Lepcha mythology and culture. Here I would attempt to give an account of my experience and gleanings.

The Lepchas are prone to monologue, one person usually speaks for a few minutes while the rest listen. They talk almost in paragraphs which appear as a long, swinging rhythm, and they loathe being interrupted in the middle of an anecdote. Hence in my strenuous treks to north Sikkim and the Lepcha settlement of Jongu, I found I could not keep up my notes and a conversation at the same time. But fortunately the villagers whom I had interviewed to glean myths and folk-tales, repeated the narratives though they disliked direct answers to certain questions. Being ignorant of the Rong language, I had a measure of difficulty in comprehending the exact inner import of some legends; all the



same, my knowledge of Nepali greatly helped me to collect materials and to have them verified and reverified. But this was done through the agency of different Lepchas discussing identical subjects, or by their conversation among themselves. After obtaining a certain piece of a narrative, I cross-examined some people with whom I had already a personal relationship.

It is impossible, within a few pages, to give an adequate picture of the cultural pattern of the Rong folk, especially when the entire cultural mosaic is based on the social, economic and religious affairs of the tribe. I would, therefore, attempt to highlight some dominant features of the Rong culture which my collected folktales and myths reflected.

## II

To begin with, the Lepcha society regards aggression unfair and very unnatural. Even socially approved aggression, such as hunting is supposed to be fraught with supernatural danger. Unlike other Himalayan tribes, namely, the Nagas, the Kukis and the Kachins of Nagaland and Upper Burma the Lepchas have no tradition of war. In a word, they are not by nature, belligerent. Envy is practically non-existent in Lepcha society, and if it manifests itself anywhere, it is regarded as an affliction caused by a devil. Then again the Lepcha folk repudiate sexual jealousy and make hardly any allowance in their social structure for passionate and exclusive sexual love. The myth of Rong-nyo (the river Tista) and Rangit points out to this issue. Although in the mythology of the Lepchas, marriage is founded on the incest of a brother and a sister, sex does not appear to be a dominant feature in the landscape of the Rong social life as Geoffrey Gorer would have us believe. In fact, Geoffrey Gorer has inordinately stressed the sex life of the Rong folk. On the contrary, Mathias Hermans, an eminent German anthropologist, who conducted monumental research work on Lepcha mythology and culture, did not share Gorer's views on the sex life of the Lepchas. It can be said with certainty that sex among the Rong folk is not a socially disruptive force but a subject of endless jokes and pranks.

A marriage is not arranged by the parents of the child concerned. Were the parents to do so, either the parties would die young or the marriage would break up. All marriage negotiations are conducted by uncles or go-between (*bek-bu*), each representing one party. Except the bridegroom's father, any experienced and tactful man possessing a rich vocabulary of an elegant periphrasis (*Tang-bor*), may play this role. A Lepcha marriage is the beginning of an intimate relationship between two families for all times to come. It is a contract between two groups. There is always some reluctance noticeable in the girls' family during a marriage proposal and very often betrothal is a period of great emotional tension, which in my opinion, is not the root cause of such repulsion. It is a deep-seated fear of leaving the family and its environment that gives rise to this hostility.

Every Lepcha belongs to a patrilineal clan or "Ptso" as it is known in Lepcha language. The "Ptso" is believed to have originated from some supernatural or legendary ancestor. These supernaturals are worshipped by all the male members of the "Ptso", and all men of one locality hold a triennial union to make a sacrifice of an ox and some jewels and valuables followed by a feast. But this sacrifice is wholly directed by the Mun (a priest of the primitive Rong religion) with no admixture of Lamaism at all. The "Ptso" is essentially an exogamic unit and its chief function is regulation of marriage and prevention of incest. A Lepcha is more respectful to his parents-in-law than to his own. The rules of Lepcha kinship are complex and Freudian or Jungian psychology can throw light on the complexity and the taboos prevalent in the social structures.

For the Rong people, like most primitive tribes of the world, food is by far the most important subject in their lives. In fact, food-gathering is the pivotal point in the stream of their social activities. Food products play a vital role in Rong sacrificial ceremonies, for most ceremonial objects are made out of grain-flour and butter. Food, however, occupies a key position in the emotional life of the Rong. Any form of love results from mutual benefits and gathering and preparation of food happen to be the foremost among them. All ceremonial occasions among the

Lepchas, viz., birth, marriage, death, religious festivals, rituals, exorcisms and social ceremonies are marked by large intake of food and drink. Even the most solemn religious ceremonies turn into feasts. The Lepchas eat the flesh of all wild animals they kill and keep cattle, goats, pigs and poultry. They eat a great variety of wild fruits, tubers and roots, and use various leaves of plants for seasoning.

The farmland in Lepcha settlement of Jongu can be classified into the land under permanent cultivation and the land which is cleared for cultivation of crops once in every eight years. Then again, the permanent cultivation is of three types, namely, the "sing" or field-garden close to the house, cardamom fields and terraced rice fields. A century ago, the wealth of a Lepcha household depended on the energy of its members and on the ratio of able-bodied adults to the dependants. In the olden days, the guiding principle of Lepcha economy was, 'from each according to his ability to each according to his work', and those afflicted by misfortune were given cooperation and voluntary help freely. To-day the picture has somewhat changed. As a consequence of permanent cultivation, the economic gap between the richest and poorest has somewhat widened. But this state of affairs has not altered the Lepchas' habit of cooperation that neutralizes differences in wealth. But then greater differences in actual wealth have not fundamentally altered the Rong peoples' non-exploitation attitude. No Lepcha, however rich, will feel inclined to exploit his poor, hapless neighbour unless the pattern of Lepcha life undergoes a complete reorientation. Although desirable, yet acquisition of riches is fraught with supernatural dangers. In the mythology of the Rong, there is a tale of Ginoo moong, a devil who kills the over-prosperous. It is perhaps the fear of this legendary devil that makes the Lepchas very unwilling to talk on the subject of their wealth. Lepcha agriculture is very inefficient, but work in farmlands, be it sowing, weeding or harvesting, is almost always done by large groups of people—the groups consisting partly of relations by blood or marriage, and partly by friends. Since the Lepchas trace descent nine generations back on the father's side and at least four on the mother's, most villagers try

to trace some relationship, and for that matter a relationship chain exists among sixty-six Lepchas out of one hundred taken at random in a village. The chief food of the Rong folk being one or another form of grain, they do not suffer from Vitamin-C deficiency, yet there is marked sterility and low fertility. In my opinion, it is probably due to genetic factors and this vital issue needs biogenic research for discovering facts.

Lepcha settlements lack geographical cohesion, for the houses either stand isolated in the fields or woods or are built in small groups of three or four. The grouping pattern of a village does not always result from any emotional or kinship bond among neighbours. Either close relations or complete strangers may live in adjacent houses.

Lepcha houses are built of bamboo which is the most important raw material for craftwork. But the houses are wholly undecorated both within and without. From this, it would be unfair to generalise that the Lepchas are totally unskilled in arts and crafts. On the contrary, they are capable of being very skilled craftsmen and I personally know good many Lepchas to be very efficient in fine carpentry work. What appears to me is that decoration for its sake is inane to the Lepchas. Lepcha water carrier, water conduits, drinking vessels ("patyoot" uses as containers for the sacrificial drink "Chi"), pins and broaches, bows and arrows, quivers and scabbards, thatching of roofs—all made of different varieties of bamboo, clearly show skilled craftsmanship of the Lepchas. Then again, mats and baskets made out of bamboo bark and various reeds as well as weaving of cloth ornamented with embroidery, unmistakably point out to the Rong's dexterity in fine handicraft and to their aesthetic sense. Lepcha cloths which are nearly always in striped patterns, are woven with exquisitely beautiful colour combinations which are highly praised by good many people. Geoffrey Gorer opines that as a generalisation the Lepchas possess neither arts nor crafts, and that no attempt is made by them to add beauty to the ordinary objects and surroundings of life. But the Lepchas' skill in handicraft runs counter to his opinion. In fact, Gorer has sordidly tainted the Lepchas' sexual life and undermined their artistic skill.

The Lepchas' love for music and dance is well-known. Viewed

in the light of the tale of the gift of Music, it can be said that music occupies a high place in the Rong's social life. Lepcha folk dance too is an integral part of their cultural life. Songs are sung at feasts and marriages.

### III

The indigenous nameless religion of the Lepchas consists of a elaborate pantheon with a colourful mythology of their own. According to this primitive religion, the Lepchas believe in a supreme God called "Rum" in their language. Then again, there are gods and innumerable devils. The devils or evil spirits are called the "Mung". All these supernaturals, benign or malignant, have various habitations. Benevolent supernaturals inhabit agreeable places like lakes or fruit-trees whereas malevolent ones lurk in disagreeable places, such as useless trees, barren field and the like.

The Rong people worship the Supreme Being Rum who protects them through the agencies of his priestess, the "Mun" and his priest, the "Bong-thing". The "Mun" and the "Bong-thing" are key points in the entire sacrificial organisation of the Rong. But the Mun and their parallel priests are individuals who, because of their possession by a spirit, have certain duties and gifts. They have no social organisation or do they hold any rank like lamas in a Buddhist church. The services of the Mun are indispensable in the life of the Rong. Their presence at birth is essential, and at marriage they are the chief priests while at the death of *oeymen* their role is of great emotional significance. Throughout the life of a Lepcha, the Mun's services are requisitioned to ward off supernatural danger, to solemnise various ceremonies, to perform rituals and, above all, to exorcise devils (*moong*).

From the legends and rituals of the Rong, one fact stands in bold relief. It is the fear of illness and the ceremonies to dispel illness that form the greatest impact on their religious life. In the Rong pantheon, "Itbomu" is believed to be the Mother of Creation besides Rum, the Chief God of the Lepchas. But instead of she being directly invoked, her creations are invoked and sacrificed. To add to this, "Lung-ten" is also a part of Mun reli-



gion. Generally it means any traditional custom which cannot be violated, such as, giving feasts.

Although the impact of Lamaism (more correctly called Mahayana Buddhism) on the life of the Lepchas is of great significance, it will be out of place here to dwell on its infinitely complicated demonology, hagiology and ritualism as well as its incorporation into the general life of the Rong folk.

The Lepchas are moved emotionally by disease, pestilence and natural calamities, and against these they take precautions and try to prevent them by certain means at their disposal, but death to them is the most potential enemy. Death being a stark reality, the Lepchas perform death ceremonies (sanglion) to ward off the danger of devil causing death, and to get rid of the dead man completely. The ceremonies for death are performed outside the house. The dead are feared and loathed by the Rong.

The Lepchas are noted for mountain climbing and walking. They live in almost inaccessible places in Jongu and elsewhere in north Sikkim, and know the language of the forest and its produce far better than any other neighbouring people. They are by nature unemotional and they dislike dramatising situations. Present-giving and a system of mutual benefits form the basis of emotional relationship. Both Rong children and adults are remarkably unselfish and the tribe as a whole, is very industrious but occasional feasts and ceremonies break the humdrum of working life.

In Rong society, good speakers are held in high esteem and elegant vocabulary is essential to intellectual entertainment. Story-telling is the greatest social diversion and stories are usually told round the fireside in the evenings after day-long work. Precision and vividness are dominant features of story-telling. The Lepchas, as a rule, do not impute motives to other's behaviour, neither do they dramatise an event. They converse slowly, probably owing to their monosyllabic language. Tolerance is an excellent virtue of the Lepchas. When their desires and physical needs are satisfied, they do not bother about other people's customs and manners, habits and habitats. Once they are contended, they view others'



life with almost philosophic indifference. But this tolerance is not the outcome of any inferiority complex.

#### IV

It is indeed hard to adequately depict the intellectual and temperamental characteristics of the Rong folk as a whole. Some of their preponderant group attitudes may be outlined. By and large, the Lepchas abide by the approved norms of behaviour. They are chary of expressing hostile feelings towards their neighbours. A strong feeling of equality among them has developed a feeling of equality between rich and poor groups. Then again the Lepchas work in a leisurely fashion and never hurry or scurry. Cheerful acceptance of reality is one of the characteristics of the Rong people's behavioral pattern. They are neither overtaken by gloom amidst poverty nor overpowered by glee amidst plenty. In fact, they have hardly any innate desire for dramatic or sensational experiences of joy or sorrow that stand out in bold outline against the background of their normal life. In the rhythm of Rong life there is perpetual feeling of contentment except in one occasion, namely, death which being absolute and inevitable is dreaded most by the Lepchas. But then they hardly formalise sorrow. Care of the body forms the basis of the Lepcha standard of beauty. The social position of a man is not much altered by his marriage, but it is not so in case of his wife. Excessive fear of devils and of poltergeist phenomena greatly influence individual Lepcha life.

In spite of the powerful impact of lamaism on their social life, the Rong folk have retained the essential fabric of their indigenous culture intact unless the Lepcha people fall victims to the blind forces of the Western civilization, the warp and woof of their fine cultural fabric will not in all probability undergo radical change.

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## *Modern Period*

# STUDY OF A FEW DOCUMENTS ON THE COINAGE OF SIKKIM

DR. P. K. BHATTACHARYA  
(*North Bengal University*)

## I

WE POSSESS little knowledge about the coinage of Sikkim. It was as early as 1909 that a paper on Sikkim Copper Coins<sup>1</sup> was written on the basis of a few stray finds in Darjeeling.<sup>2</sup> Notices on Sikkim coinage have been made in a few other works.<sup>3</sup> In course of my investigation I have collected interesting information about these coins from Sikkim and adjoining areas. I take this opportunity of presenting here some unpublished Tibetan records<sup>4</sup> which are extremely important from the point of view of the history of the coinage of Sikkim. These documents are in the nature of contracts given to the Newarese traders<sup>5</sup> for minting copper coins during the reign of Thotab Namgyal (1874-1914) of Sikkim. I obtained the photostat copies of these documents from the office of Mr. T. P. Gazamir, Under Secretary to the former Chogyal of Sikkim,<sup>6</sup> and later on I compared them with the original documents, now lying with the family of the late M. C. Pradhan of Kalimpong.

### *Translations of the Tibetan documents*

#### *Text I*

Be it known to all the monks and laymen residing within the kingdom in general and those led by the Newar trader Lakshmidar in particular that in accordance with their request made in the petition submitted by the latter requesting permission to mint coins

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(Doli) we had written to Lord Eden Saheb through the Political Officer and obtained his concurrence. In pursuance thereof order has been issued to Lakshmidar, the Newar trader, and others communicating grant of permission to mint chepte paisa (coins). Recently, an application has been received through Garzong requesting similar permission to mint coins and in this connection order has already been passed granting permission for a period of 5 years....

From the palace on the third day of the tenth month of the Water-Sheep year.<sup>7</sup>

### *Text II*

... You will acknowledge receipt of the written order permitting you to mint coins and also a receipt of tax paid by you—both of which were sent through Garzong (Karmi Zongpon)....

From the palace on the third of the tenth month.

## II

The history of coinage of Sikkim is of short duration. We are not certain whether the rulers of Sikkim developed any indigenous coinage of their own in earlier period. The system of trading by barter which was prevalent in Sikkim from early times, however, seems to have been in vogue even in the time of Thotab Namgyal. We possess an interesting document issued from the palace in 1883 A.D., in which instruction was given to the Newarese merchants of Sikkim to procure certain articles like rice, maize, flower, chilli, chang beer of good quality, etc., by way of exchange from the local people, as these articles would be required for the entertainment of a few royal guests.<sup>8</sup>

The necessity of coins of lesser denominations for ordinary commercial transaction was, however, actually felt by the business community towards the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Indian Rupee already appeared there by way of subvention payable to the king of Sikkim.<sup>9</sup> Also, from a letter (dated Samvat 1942, i.e., 1885 A.D.) of the Newar trader Lakshmidar



Pradhan addressed to Col. Gajrejang Thapa, Governor of Elam (in Nepal), it appears that from Samvat 1906 (i.e., 1849 A.D.) onwards the Doli paisa of Nepal was current in the territory of Sikkim with the permission of the British.<sup>10</sup> It may be noticed here that the coins of Nepal were also in circulation in Tibet even from earlier times.<sup>11</sup>

The Newar traders, who became the owners of the copper mines<sup>12</sup> of Sikkim, found that the minting of copper coins would not only facilitate commercial transactions but would also be a profitable business.<sup>13</sup> Hence, they decided to play the role of mint-masters (*Taksari*) of the country. From Samvat 1939 (i.e., 1882 A.D.), the Doli paisa and later the Chepte paise, in close imitation of the Nepalese currency,<sup>14</sup> began to be issued by the Newar traders of Sikkim with the consent of the king and the approval of the British.<sup>15</sup> In this way, the Newar traders entered into new contracts with Thutob Namgyal for minting different types of coins. The first contract issued in response to the traders' petition for Doli paisa appeared to have been lost. But the second one (cf. Text I) meant for Chepte paisa (initially for five years) contains important information concerning Doli paisa as well. It may, however, be mentioned that in the space below the Text No. 1 there is a three-line Nepalese hand-written endorsement which refers to the payment of Rs. 100/- made by the mint masters in Samvat 1940 in honour of Government order permitting them to mint Chepte paisa. These documents thus refer to the formal permission of the Government to mint coins as well as remittance of the receipt of the tax paid by the party. Both of these were sent through Garzong (also possibly known as Karmi Zongpon), apparently a royal official.<sup>16</sup>

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Sikkim, the twenty-second State of Indian Republic lying between 27' 5" and 28' 9" N. and 87' 59" and 88' 56" E. is also known as 'Denjong' and 'Demojong' or 'Demoshong'.

- <sup>2</sup> 'Sikkim Copper Coins' by M. M. Chakravarti in the *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, New Series*, Vol. V, 1909, pp. 15-17.
- <sup>3</sup> W. A. Valentine, *The Copper Coins of India*, Part 1, 1941; A. W. Botham, *Catalogue of the Provincial Cabinet of Coins, Assam*, 2nd edn., 1930.
- <sup>4</sup> I am greatly indebted to Ven. Tulku Thondup, Reader in the Department of Indo-Tibetan Studies, Visva-Bharati and to M. C. Pradhan and Dhardo-Rimpoche, both of Kalimpong for helping me in translating the present documents into English.
- <sup>5</sup> Two Newar brothers, viz., Lakshmidar Pradhan and Chandrabir Pradhan, secured a mining lease for copper and also agricultural estates in Sikkim in 1868. *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, pp. 57 ff; cf. the letter of M. C. Pradhan of Kalimpong addressed to the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling, dated the 30th Sept. 1952.
- <sup>6</sup> Cf. the letter of T. P. Gazamir, Under Secretary to the Chogyal and it was addressed to me (vide his D.O. Letter No. 1580/Sc, dated August 23, 1971. The letter is at present with me).
- <sup>7</sup> From 1927 A.D. the Tibetans adapted the system of reckoning years in terms of cycle of sixty years (i.e., Sexagenary Cycle) known as *rab-byun* in Tibetan (= *prabhava* in Sanskrit). P. Pelliot, *Journal Asiatique*, 1913, pp. 633-67; A. Chattopadhyaya, *Atisa and Tibet*, Calcutta, 1967, pp. 563 ff. In accordance with the Tibetan calculation mentioned above (the present cycle being the sixteenth cycle starts from 1927 A.D.), the present water-(female)-sheep year will be equivalent to 1883 A.D.
- <sup>8</sup> The original document is at present lying with the family of the late M. C. Pradhan of Kalimpong.
- <sup>9</sup> The king of Sikkim came into close alliance with the British by assisting them against the Gurkhas in 1814 and at the end of the war (1816) was rewarded with territory and the guarantee of protection. In February 1835 the king granted the site of Darjeeling to the British, and received in return a pension of Rs. 3000/- per annum. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol XXII, 1908, pp. 365-73.
- <sup>10</sup> The rough copy of the original letter (in Nepal) is now in the possession of the family of the late M. C. Pradhan of Kalimpong. Incidentally, M. C. Pradhan was the great grandson of the Taksari Lakshmidar Pradhan.
- <sup>11</sup> C. R. Markham (ed.), *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet (1774) and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lasha*, 2nd edn., London, 1879, p. 129, note.
- <sup>12</sup> Of a number of the copper mines discovered in Sikkim, only the two, viz., Pachikhani and Rathokhani (near Chakang) remained operative during the last decade of the nineteenth century. *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, p. 71.

- <sup>13</sup> It is not true to say as suggested by M. M. Chakraborty (*op. cit.*, p. 16) that with the arrival of the imported cheap foreign copper, the business of the Newar traders stopped and they had to resort to minting of coins, for the export of Sikkim copper was actually stopped long after the discontinuation of minting of Sikkim coins; *The Gazetteer of India, Sikkim*, p. 66.
- <sup>14</sup> Cf. E. H. Walsh, *The Coinage of Nepal*, Delhi, 1973, pl. VII, No. 11 (Copper Coins of Surendra Vikrama, Saka 1873).
- <sup>15</sup> From a letter addressed to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal issued from the Foreign Department (Finance), Simla, dated the 20th July 1881 (*Document No. 18EF in the National Archives Library*, New Delhi), it appears that the Government of India expressed "no objection" to the request of the Maharaja of Sikkim to make "Dooba" (same as Doli) paisa at the copper mines in his territory. Subsequently, the minting of Chepte paisa also received similar approval of the British (cf. Text No. 1).
- <sup>16</sup> The name of the official mentioned in the translation of the document sent to me by the former Chogyal (vide the letter of the Under Secretary to the Chogyal addressed to me D.O. No. 1580/Sc, dated August 23, 1971).

## SOURCE MATERIALS FOR SIKKIM HISTORY (MODERN PERIOD)

DR. TAPASH KR. ROY CHOUDHURY

(University of North Bengal)

### I

SOURCE MATERIAL for Sikkim history, which has been a neglected field for a long time, has never been discussed in depth by researchers either in erstwhile Sikkim or in India. Perfunctory writing here or a travelogue there, all done on the basis of hearsay, are almost all that was written about Sikkim until Riseley, in the *Sikkim Gazetteer*, wrote a somewhat connected account of Sikkim on the basis of very scanty sources. Campbell, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, wrote long notes to the Government of India regarding Sikkim Morung, but it was tendentious and had been designed to build up economic justification for the annexation of Morung rather than writing a piece of sound history. Where he could have been more of a researcher was on the pages of the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Vol. XVI, Part I, 1849 and Vol. 40, no. 4, 1871), in which he wrote two articles recounting his experiences in Sikkim in 1848, but it was vitiated by his myopic vision which got him nowhere beyond the immediate political considerations of his time. And, besides, interest in Sikkim's past was so much confined to a handful of British officers that a genuine search for source material or for historical evidence, for that matter, was never undertaken by them or by any other historian. The Sikkimese too did no better.

Under these circumstances, work towards compiling a bibliography of Sikkim history has long remained to be finished and its necessity too was inadequately felt, until it was done first by the *Journal of Asian Studies* in 1959 and then by Livida Schappert

in an occasional paper No. 10 published by the University of Hawaii in 1968. Some three years before that Wain Wrights, M. D. Mathe and W. Nowel Camp published a bibliography of South and South East Asian manuscripts in 1965. A press list of Ancient Documents preserved in the Imperial Record Room of the Government of India, where Sikkimese documents have been preserved, was also published from Calcutta in 1910.

Schappert, among the compilers mentioned above, has done the most systematic work in her paper. She recorded all the books and articles written on Sikkim history, geography, flora and fauna and her culture, and annotated them as far as practicable for the guidance of the researchers. She covered a period from 1800 to 1968 and noted all the materials about Sikkim published in the European languages. The annotations were brief, sometimes a bare three-four lines, which contained a summary of the book or paper discussed and were often a little vague, because Schappert has failed to treat her materials with uniform skill. Besides, the most serious lapse which can be noticed in her bibliography is almost the complete absence of Sikkimi sources, chronicles written in Sikkimi languages and written or compiled from Lepcha-Bhutia mythologies which contained very valuable data for the reconstruction of Sikkim history, religious systems, legal practice and social customs. The Lho-cho-jung or Reh Umig (Chronicles) of Yeses D Pal L Byor, translated by S. C. Das (*J.A.S.B.*, Vol. LXVII, Part 1, No. 2, 1889) are indeed extremely relevant for Sikkim history of the early periods. In this respect the bibliography compiled by the *Journal of Asian Studies* is no improvement.

The bibliography of Wain Wrights and others lists very few manuscripts from Sikkim giving more exhaustive information about manuscript-materials of other South and South East Asian countries. The press list of ancient documents, as preserved in the Imperial Record Room, is incomplete in the matter of collection of Sikkimi documents as well as in their documentation. Even such an important document, namely, *History of Sikkim*, compiled by Their Highnesses the Maharaja and Maharani of

Sikkim, which is a common knowledge among scholars of Sikkim history to-day, has neither been collected nor mentioned in the press list.

## II

Source materials for Sikkim history and culture, now, may be studied under two categories, i.e., (i) Sikkimi sources which would include myths, chronicles and books written or compiled by the Sikkimese either in their own languages or done in English translation. This category of source material though not enormous in volume is not very meagre either, since some very important chronicles have been spotted and collected by competent scholars in Sikkim. Though all of them have not been translated into English, they are being used in Sikkim now to reconstruct unknown chapters in Sikkim history. For the category number (ii) we design to include the non-Sikkimi materials, that is, archival materials in the National Archives, West Bengal State Archives and in the India Office Library, and books, pamphlets and papers written by the Indian officials and the non-officials, who visited Sikkim for various purposes. The Sikkim Residency Papers too, though not yet published, are a valuable source of information about events since the Residency was set up in 1889.

## III

Of the Sikkimi sources, the most complete work that was ever written is the *Sikkim History* compiled in 1908 by Maharajan Sir Thutob Namgyal and his wife Maharani Yeshay Dolma of Sikkim and translated into English by Kazi Dawa Samdeep. There are at least three typescript copies of this compilation known to us. The palace library at Gangtok possesses a very well preserved copy of the *History of Sikkim* and the India Office Library too is recorded to have preserved one. Alstair Lamb, while writing his thesis, i.e., Britain in Chinese Central Asia, has consulted it but later, when we contacted the IOL authorities for



a microfilm copy of the manuscript, it could not be traced. The Royal Central Asian Society Library, too, collected the personal copy of this book from Sir Charles Bell.

The history of Sikkim, as traced in the *Sikkim History*, went as far back as the fourth century B.C. when, as the legends go in Sikkim, a descendant of King Indrabodhi has migrated to Mynak, which has been identified with Kham in eastern Tibet. The Mynak kingdom was established by the Buddhist migrants from the Western Himalayas with the decline of Buddhism there. Later, the authors of the *Sikkim History* discussed the incidents which accounted for the rise of the Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim. Starting with Khye-Bumsa, who has been treated as the first man in the Namgyal family tree, they discussed briefly the history of Mipon Rab, Guru Tashi, Guru Tenzing until Phuntsog Namgyal was found to be consecrated as Gyalpo (King) by three lamas in 1642. A number of administrative reforms, which included the formation of twelve-member royal Council and the division of the kingdom in twelve districts (Dzongs), have been attributed to Phuntsog Namgyal.

Due to paucity of adequate materials the authors could not give detailed information about the first five members of the dynasty. But the situation changed with the accession of Chador Namgyal in 1700 and the family chronicles are found to have treated the major political incidents in details. The authors of *Sikkim History* too used them very judiciously to construct a very probable account of life in Sikkim since then. Though there are no external corroborative evidences to these accounts until British India took interest in Sikkim affairs, the accounts as such do not appear to be untenable, although the history of the origin of the Namgyal Dynasty cannot be treated as sufficiently objective and reliable. In Nepal, too, some corroborative documents can be had since the accession of Prithvinarayan Shah and his conquests in Sikkim, but their versions differ in substantial measure from the contention of the *Sikkim History* for obvious political reasons.

While treating the history of Sikkim from 1700 to 1860 the authors shed lights on many unknown chapters in Sikkim history.

Some very important incidents like the Sikkim-Bhutan relations, Nepal's bid to conquer Sikkim and Sikkimi responses and finally the Sikkim version of the Darjeeling settlement with the East India Company have been related with skill. It was never known, except among the Sikkimese in the form of legend, that Chuthup (Satrajit) was a great military general and that it was to his military skill that the Sikkimese owe their independence in the wake of Nepali invasions until the *Sikkim History* brought it to the notice of the non-Sikkimese. After the accession of Thutob Namgyal in 1874, the Indo-Sikkim relations had deteriorated for which the British documents hold him to blame. His measures to contain Nepali migration inside Sikkim was misunderstood as an act of racial arrogance, and on the basis of very doubtful evidence, which a British officer collected while engaged in a survey work in the Sikkim-Tibet border, that some officers in the Calcutta Secretariat induced the Government of India to adopt a very hard line towards him. All the insults and ignominies with which he had been treated, first suspending the payment of Darjeeling subvention and then throwing him into prison and on top of that derecognising his eldest son, who was in Tibet for his studies, as the legitimate successor, have never been treated by the British officers who did not care to write about them with even an iota of non-partisanship. Claude White was an appendage of British imperialism in India. His excessive love of power and money, to which some documents in the collection of the Indian National Archives will testify, prompted him to be friendly with dissident groups in Sikkim in total disregard of the interest of the Royal Family. All that he did, by introducing a new land distribution policy or a rational taxation system, would appear to every intelligent person to be an eye-wash which can never produce a lasting beneficial effect. *Sikkim History*, among other things, successfully reconstructed a Sikkimese version of these incidents which, as one reads them, would tone down one's attitude towards Thutob who was always painted as the villain of the piece by the British officials.

As a piece of history, *Sikkim History* would rate not too high, for the authors did never frame their answers on the basis of questions which twentieth-century historiography would con-

sider to be very essential, but its importance as a chronicle of political events is indeed enormous. What a reader of *Sikkim History* would not like is a mystic religious veneer that threaded its accounts, for some important clerics who were involved at the time of its compilation, had unwittingly attributed to political incidents some very improbable religious explanations in order to gratify the religious passion of the Royal couple. However, if British documents embodying the Indian policy could be used as defence of their policies in Sikkim, the *Sikkim History* provided the strongest possible argument of the Sikkim people to defend their acts and a testament of what slights they suffered in the hands of some officers whose strongest point was hatred towards the Sikkimese.

The *Sikkim History* apart, a number of Lepcha chronicles that have been compiled from time to time, and whose some very rare manuscripts are preserved in the Library of the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, are very useful as source material for Sikkim History. Legend of the Pauaus (kings) is one such manuscript which was written sometime in the late eighteenth century describing the rule of different Lepcha kings in Sikkim. Similarly the biography of Lhaptsmu Namkhajigme, who patronised Buddhism in Sikkim in the seventeenth century, is almost a contemporary record of Sikkim society and culture. Jam-Gling-Rgyas-Bshad (Jamling-gya-shad), a narrative of the world written in Tibetan sometime in 1820 A.D. is another source of Sikkim history. The Tibetan part of the *World History* has been translated by Alfanso Ferrari, while the rest, which includes Sikkim and India, is yet to be translated into English. By way of guiding an outsider or Sikkimi to the Holy places in Sikkim the author of *Denzong Neyyig* spoke too about the kings who patronised them and how different Buddhist 'gumphas' and 'chortens' came into being in Sikkim. They sometimes provide very interesting insights into the theocratic politics of Sikkim.

The Sikkimi laws and social customs, being very much of religious nature, are believed to be drawn from the spoken words of Raja Me-long-dong, who is believed to have lived in India

before the time of Buddha. A reference to this king is found in the thirty-first chapter of *Kanjur*. The laws, as the legends had it, went through modifications by Kun-ga-gyal-tsan of Sa-kyapa in the twelfth century and again in the seventeenth century by De-si-saugye Gya-tsho before they were introduced in Sikkim for the laity. Nothing is so far known about the secular or grass-root aspect of Sikkimi culture recorded by any Sikkimi either in Lepcha language or in Tibetan, the two languages in which the chroniclers normally used to write their accounts.

And besides, a little before Indian independence, when other native states within India have been considering seriously to regain their independence with the lapse of British paramountcy, Sikkim also had been contemplating to get back Darjeeling. It drew up a memorandum, the original of which is preserved in the Sikkim Palace Archives, arguing its case; and while doing so it offered to explain the term 'paramountcy' in order to analyse the Darjeeling settlement in true legal perspective. Drawn up by Sardar D. K. Sen, who has been employed by the State of Hyderabad at a later date to argue its case against merger with India, the memorandum is a valuable piece of document which can be put to use to understand the Sikkimi view of the Anglo-Sikkim relations ever since Darjeeling Settlement was signed by Maharaja Tsugphud Namgyal.

#### IV

The non-Sikkimi sources, which historians very frequently use, may be studied under four different categories, viz.

- (a) Official Despatches,
- (b) Reports,
- (c) Travellers' Accounts, and
- (d) History of Sikkim written by nineteenth and early twentieth century historians.

(a) The source materials under category (a) are spread over a large number of files in the National Archives of India to which we shall make a brief reference. Sikkim being a foreign country,

in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and at least in the eyes of the East India Company officials, was never given to any other department than Foreign for all sorts of intercourse with her. Therefore, all letters, despatches, demi-official notes and even routine survey of Indo-Sikkim relations went into Foreign Department files under various denominations. For Sikkim, a researcher finds the following classified documents as very valuable :

- (1) Foreign Political Consultations,
- (2) Foreign Political Proceedings,
- (3) Foreign Secret Consultations,
- (4) Foreign Secret Proceedings,
- (5) Foreign Miscellaneous Proceedings,
- (6) Foreign Political Consultations (Supplementary),
- (7) Foreign Department Proceedings, General Branch,
- (8) Foreign Department Proceedings, External Branch,
- (9) Foreign Department Proceedings, Secret E Branch, and
- (10) Foreign Department Proceedings, Political Branch.

These files were opened at about 1817 with cross-reference of Ganga Bahadur Thapa, a military general of Maharaja Prithvi Naryan Shah of Nepal, who invaded a part of Sikkim Morung in North Bengal in 1775. Later, systematic collection of papers regarding Sikkim took place since the Treaty of Titalia in 1817, which opened a channel of communication with Sikkim.

Apart from the documents mentioned above another series of files, which contained despatches from and to the Court of Directors, have significance in understanding the policies of the Court of Directors towards the Sikkim question. The documents that come under this category are :

- (1) General Letters to the Court of Directors,
- (2) General Letters from the Court of Directors,
- (3) Political Letters to the Court of Directors,
- (4) Secret Despatches from the Court of Directors to the Governor-General,
- (5) Secret Despatches from the Governor-General to the Court of Directors, and
- (6) India Despatch to the Court of Directors.

In the Public Record Office, London, Foreign office files with



classification numbers of 17, 1108, 1109 and from 1745 to 1756 deal exclusively with Tibet and Sikkim.

From the State Archives, West Bengal, the most important series of documents, to which references ought to be made, are Rangpore Records, particularly Volumes I and VI, which bear evidence of the first British contacts with Sikkim in the late eighteenth century. Ducarel, the Superintendent of Purnea, was perhaps the first British officer to have noticed Sikkim Morung in 1770 and all that Ducarel observed was its economic potential with stately trees and settled agriculture, although knowledge about Sikkim proper then was neither sought nor desired. With Warren Hastings finding a trade route to Tibet and China through the Himalayas, a new era was opened ; and Gurkha expansionism which laid the Western Sikkim to repeated invasions also involved the English in Morung, as Ganga Bahadur Thapa invaded it. For these early contacts, Rangpore Records are invaluable evidence and are perhaps the only documents which can be put to use to construct the story of British Relations with Sikkim, Bhutan and Cooch-Bihar in the first phase. The other important government papers in the West Bengal State Archives, which deal with this region, is the proceedings of the Lieutenant Governors in Bengal.

(b) The second category of non-Sikkimi sources consists of a number of published reports which were written by officers for some specific political or military reasons. Some of these reports were very trite, written without imagination, and had been done within the frame of set-purposes. The authors refrained from mentioning many things which came in the way ; nevertheless they served their purposes unwaveringly. Those which would be rated as excellent are not many, but by their quality they have laid to debt generations of researchers in this field. Edgar's *Report on a Visit to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier*, written in 1874, is a report of very superior quality. Although sent to the Sikkim-Tibetan frontier to explore trade routes, Edgar made more than that and wrote a connected history of Sikkim and her culture which none of his predecessors has ever done. The historical section, despite its scantiness, has been very useful, particularly to those who did not know Sikkim history, and even Sir



Richard Temple put it to profitable use when he wrote the introduction of the Sikkim section of his two volumes *Journals* kept in Hyderabad, Kashmir, Sikkim and Nepal in 1887. As a supplement to Edgar's report the observations of Colman Macaulay in his *Report of a Mission to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier with a Memorandum on our Relations with Tibet* (1885) and the other book, namely, *Narrative of the Political Relations of the Government of India with Native States* (1862), written before his Report on Tibet, are indeed very useful. However, it has to be kept in mind that Macaulay was overzealous and the Indian Government too was not sympathetic towards his ideas for the political implications which they would entail.

Reports which served specific purposes are indeed many and they are useful sources enabling researchers to understand British motivations in the North Eastern Region of India. A. Campbell, after Ducarel, again wrote *Papers on the Sikkim Morung* (Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government, No. 5, 1851) whose specific object was to annex it to keep the hill people under economic pressure. It was done in conformity with the traditional British presumption in India that annexation of the plains attached to the Hill States, on which they depend for economic reasons, would make them dependent on the government which controls them. This is British imperialism making out its arguments and earlier examples of this attitude is discerned in the *Papers Relating to the Nepal War* (printed in conformity to the Resolution of the Court of Proprietors of the East India Stock of 3rd March, 1824), where reference to Sikkim has been made in relevant contexts. In spite of resistance put up by Tsugphud Namgyal Sikkim had to succumb in 1862 and its detail from the British side is given in *East India : Sikkim Expedition : Accounts and Papers 1862*, XL. A more comprehensive account of British activities in the entire North Eastern Himalays is given in *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, compiled by the Intelligence Branch, Division of the Chief of Staff, Army Head Quarters, Simla, 1907, Vol. IV, North and North-East Frontier Tribes.

Reports on Darjeeling administration, Tibet, internal and

external trade of Bengal and summary of affairs in the Foreign Department are not also negligible. D. B. Jackson's *Report on Darjeeling* (Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government, No. XVII, Vol. IV, 1854) throws light on many aspects of Darjeeling administration and on the political condition in this frontier. For the same period or a little after that J. T. Wheeler's *Summary of the Affairs of the Government of India in the Foreign Department for 1864-1866* (Calcutta, 1868) provides corroborative evidences. Papers on Tibet, which in fact was the main target of the British commercial interest, to which Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan worked only as subsidiaries, are many and they are as much interesting to guess India's Tibetan policy as on those who had held the gateways. *Papers Relating to Tibet*, 1904 (Cmd 1920), *Further Papers Relating to Tibet*, 1904 (Cmd 2054) and *Further Papers Relating to Tibet*, 1905 (Cmd 2370) are very useful. *Exploration in Tibet and Neighbouring Regions 1865-1879*, *Records of the Survey of India*, Vol. 8, in two parts, therefore, are equally important. His Majesty's Consul-General at Changtu, Mr. A. Hosie also wrote a very interesting *Report on a Journey to the Eastern Frontier of Tibet* (Cmd 2586). Besides, *Report on the Internal Trade of Bengal for the year 1877-78* (Calcutta 1878), *Reports on the External Trade of Bengal with Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan 1880-1905* and *Sikkim Administrative Reports since 1909* are important source material for studying Indo-Sikkim relations.

(c) As for travellers' accounts, which form the third category of source material, the number is legion and so, while sorting them out, we select those among them which directly involve Sikkim and are important for the quality of perceptions as for their chronology. H. Ballantine's *On India's Frontier on Nepal : The Gourkhas Mysterious Land* is one such account written on the basis of direct observation of Nepal and her frontiers. Written in 1816, when the Anglo-Nepal war came to a conclusion, the book is chronologically as much important as far the story which it related. T. T. Cooper's two books, namely, *Journal of an Overland Journey from China towards India* and *Travels of a Pioneer of Commerce*, the first one published in

1869 and the second in 1871, are important for almost the same reasons for which importance has been attributed to Ballantine's book.

For Sikkim history J. D. Hooker is a memorable personality, whose *Himalayan Journals* (vol. 2) published in 1855, provided the background for many aspects of Sikkim history and culture. The credit for attempting to write the first connected history of Sikkim is also attributed to him, though it was never put to print. Sarat Chandra Das is another personality, who stood out from almost all others of his time in the depth of his learning in Tibetology as well as in adventurousness, which lent to his character a quality of classicality. His *Narratives of a Journey to Lasha* published in 1885 is therefore particularly mentionable.

*Particulars of a Visit to the Sikkim Hills, etc., Gleanings in Science* written by J. D. Herbert in 1830 and *Travels in Ceylon and Continental India, including Nepal and other parts of the Himalayas, to the borders of Tibet, with some Notices of the overland Routes* published in 1848 by W. Hoffmeister belongs also to the same category. In the context of Sikkim in the early nineteenth century *Letters from India* (2 vols.) by V. Jacquemont and published in 1834 is also useful in a restricted sense. J. A. H. Louis edited a book under the title *The Gates of Thibet* in 1894, which laid bare the importance of the small Himalayan principalities in the British search for Tibetan trade. *Report on a Visit to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier* published by J. E. Ware in 1874 also has merits as a source book for Sikkim history and culture in late nineteenth century. Finally, 'Journal of a trip... in the Sikkim Himalayas' published by J. L. Sherwill in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. V, 1862 deserves mention. F. Donaldson's *Lepcha Land or Six Weeks in the Sikkim Himalaya* (1900) is also full of information.

(d) In the final category we shall include books and articles, which have been written on Sikkim history or on events and personalities that bear direct relationship with Sikkim history. Therefore, we can start with H. V. Bayley's *Dorjeling* written in 1838 on the Darjeeling Himalaya, which was ceded to the

British only three years before the book was published. K. C. Bhanja's *Mystic Tibet and the Himalayas* (1948) and *Wonders of the Darjeeling and the Sikkim Himalayas* (1943) are interesting. E. C. Dozey's *Darjeeling, Past and Present* (1917) as the title suggests gives a comparative study of Darjeeling from 1835 to 1917. D. Freshfields' *Round Kanchenjung* (1903), T. G. Hathorn's *A Hand-book of Darjeeling* (1863) and C. A. Parkharst's *Sikkim* (1946) are all important in one way or the other. L. A. Waddell, an expert of an Himalayan Buddhism, wrote many books; those which we consider relevant to our purpose here are : *Among the Himalayas* (1900) and *Lamaism in Sikkim*. H. Whistler's *In the High Himalayas* (1929) is tolerably useful. *Tours in Sikkim and Darjeeling District* (1922) written by P. Brown is highly interesting for his comments on the monastery architectures.

In *Tibet Past and Present* (1924) Charles Bell, who was a political officer in Sikkim, has recorded some very valuable information about Sikkim. Discussing the military problems J. C. Gowler wrote his *Sikkim with Hints on Mountain and Jungle Warfare*, 1873. Similarly, *The Second Battalion, Derbyshire Regiment in the Sikkim Expedition of 1888* (1900) by H. H. Iggulden was written in the background of the military expedition on the Sikkim-Tibet frontier. J. Malcolm's *Political History of India from 1784 to 1823* (2 vols., 1826) is important as a history book in our context too. Simultaneously, H. T. Prinsep's *History of the Political and Military Transactions in India During the Administration of Marquess of Hastings, 1813-1823*, 2 vols. (1825) is important. *Getting to Know the Central Himalayas : Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan* (1964) by L. B. Bedford is admirable. And equally, J. F. Rock's *Excerpts from a History of Sikkim*, *Anthropos : Revue internationale L'ethnologie' et de linguistique*, Fribourg, XLVIII, 1953 makes very interesting reading. Another work, which deserves to be mentioned in this connection, is H. Siliger's *Ethnological Field Research in Chitnal, Sikkim and Assam : Preliminary Report series, Historisk-filologiske Meddeliser*, Vol. 36, 1956.

*Sir Charles Wood's Administration of Indian Affairs from 1859 to 1866* (1887) by A. West offers glimpse of India Office's

attitude towards the northern frontier question. J. C. White's *Sikkim and Bhutan, Twenty One Years on the North East Frontier 1887-1908* (1909) is undoubtedly important, although it tends to be tendentious writing in many respects. E. T. William's *Tibet and Her Neighbours* (1937), H. E. Richardson's *Tibet and its History* (1962), T. W. D. Shakabpa's *Tibet, A Political History* and F. Younghusband's three books, namely, (i) *India and Tibet* (1910), (ii) *Memorandum of our Relations with Tibet both Past and Present* (1903), and (iii) *Our Position in Tibet* (1910) also may be treated as source books for Sikkim history.

Before concluding our discussion we would like to refer to a few other publications. *Private Letters of Marquess of Dalhousie* (1911) by J. G. A. Baird is the first to mention, and with it goes *The Private Journals of Marquess of Hastings*, 2 vols. (1858) by Duke of Marchioness, *The Life and Correspondence of Charles Lord Metcalfe*, 2 vols. (1858) and *Selection from the Papers of Lord Metcalfe* (1875) by J. W. Kaye. C. Ross edited *The Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, three volumes (1859) and T. Walround edited *Letters and Journals of James, Eighth Earl of Elgin* (1872). W. W. Hunter edited *Essays on the External Policy of India* by J. W. S. Nyllic. Major Ross of Blandeburg wrote a biography of the Marquess of Hastings (1900) which, too, is helpful. And C. E. Buckland's *Bengal under the Lieutenant Governors*, two volumes (1901) offers valuable information about ideas and policies of different Bengal Governors towards Sikkim. Regarding trade across the Himalayas and Sikkim's role, S. Camman's *Trade through the Himalayas, the Early British Attempts to open Tibet* (1951) is very important. As for the Lepchas who are known as the autochthons of this region A. K. Das and S. K. Banerjee wrote *The Lepchas of Darjeeling District* (1962) and G. Gorer wrote *Himalayan Village : An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim* (1938).

J. Easton wrote *An Unfrequented Highway through Sikkim and Tibet to Chumolaori* (1928). A. Lyall wrote an exhaustive biography, namely, *The Life of Marquess of Dufferin and Ava*,



two volumes (1905) and Viscount Mersey wrote *The Viceroy and Governor Generals of India 1757-1947* (1949). Sir F. O'Connor's memoirs *On the Frontier and Beyond : A Record of Thirty Years of Service* (1931) is indeed valuable.

## V

The above account of documents and books, which we have tried to give is by no means complete ; nevertheless it would provide a background to the study of Sikkim history and culture whose importance, now, is further enhanced by her accession to India. What we have chosen wilfully to keep out are those books and articles which were written on the basis of the sources discussed and are not sources themselves.



# JOHN CLAUDE WHITE'S ROLE IN SIKKIM (1887-1908)

PROFESSOR M. V. SAHASRABUDHE

(Mahatma Basweshwar College, Latur, Dist. Osmanabad)

## I

THE INDIAN career of John Claude White extended to nearly thirty-two years of active service. He spent more than twenty-one years on the North-East Frontier in the administration of that region. Out of these twenty-one years he was for some years in political charge of the little known state of Sikkim. Later on he was in political charge of the little known state of Bhutan, Chumbi and Gyantse of South-East Tibet. He had also spent one year of his career in Khatmandu, the capital of Nepal.

White visited Darjeeling in 1881 for the first time. In 1881, he started looking across the valleys of the Rungeet and the Teesta rivers. He wanted to penetrate into the stupendous mountains and valleys with their magnificent forests and rivers to explore the everlasting snows and glaciers and to come into contact with their interesting people. Beyond these mountains lay the mysterious, unknown land of Tibet.

In 1888, there was the outbreak of the Sikkim-Tibet war. "The immediate cause of the Sikkim Expedition of 1888 was the despatch by the Thibetan authorities of an armed force of 300 men, across the Sikkim Frontier, which commanded the trade route between Darjeeling and Thibet." Lord Dufferin was the Governor-General of India during the period from 1884 to 1888. He was followed by Lord Lansdowne as the Viceroy of India from December 1888 to 1893. He belonged to the forward

school of thought. He devoted special attention to the question of frontier defence. That time the Commander-in-Chief of India was Lord Roberts who had his aggressive ways.<sup>1</sup>

## II

### SIKKIM-TIBET WAR (1888) JOHN CLAUDE WHITE AS ASSISTANT POLITICAL OFFICER

John Claude White was sent as Assistant Political Officer with the expeditionary force. The war lasted for one year and in 1889 peace was concluded. In the same year White was appointed Political Officer in the administrative charge of Sikkim in conjunction with a council composed of the Chief Dewans, Lamas and Kazis.<sup>2</sup>

On assuming responsibility John Claude White visited different parts of Sikkim which had a heterogeneous population of Lepchas, Bhutias, Tibetans, Bhutanese and Paharias.

He came into close contact with the people of Sikkim and its rulers. He liked all of them. He collected information of them by reading many books on Sikkim, Government records and Tibetan manuscripts. He carried out successfully many missions and explorations in the beautiful and interesting country of Sikkim. The country was unknown to the foreigners up to 1894 in which year Risley wrote his Introduction to the *Sikkim Gazetteer*.<sup>3</sup>

Sikkim and Bhutan are two adjoining countries covering between them an area of about 22,000 square miles lying to the north east of Darjeeling and to the north of the British districts of Jalpaiguri, Goalpara and Kamrup. The Chumbi valley, formerly a part of Sikkim but now belonging to Tibet forms a wedge which divides the northern portion of Sikkim from Bhutan while Sikkim itself lies within the watershed of the river Teesta.

Referring to the Lepchas, the earliest and original inhabitants of Sikkim,<sup>4</sup> John Claude White says: "They make most trustworthy and excellent servants and are quite exceptional people amongst whom it is a pleasure to live. I speak from a

very intimate knowledge of their ways and habits and having spent a very happy twenty years period amongst them with friends in every degree from the Maharaja himself to the humblest coolies."<sup>5</sup> They profess Buddhism and are generally very devotional.

Another race is of the Bhuteas. They migrated to Sikkim, perhaps before the advent of the Sikkim Rajas. They are of Tibetan origin. Their religion is Buddhism or Lamaism. The other race is of Paharias who have migrated from Nepal. They are almost all Hindus by religion. They are steady, industrious and thrifty people, very pushing and eager to take up new employments. They are excellent settlers. John Claude White says, "Many of their headmen are excellent managers, thoroughly to be trusted and will carry out anything they undertake to do to the best of their ability. I have known Nepalese settlers in Sikkim, by dint of hard work and perseverance, rise to important positions which they have in marked contrast to Lepchas."<sup>6</sup>

The only plainmen from India to be found in Sikkim are a few Marwaris and men of Bania or shopkeeper class who came for trading purposes and settled under the protection of the British Raj since the expedition of 1888.

### III

#### SIKKIM BRITISH RELATION 1817—TREATY AT TITALIA ON FEBRUARY 10, 1817

"The victorious Britishers unlike Chinese did not forget to reward Sikkim for its share of help in the war and as a gesture of good will, the then Governor-General of India, Lord Moira (later Marquess of Hastings), ordered the restoration of territory lying between the rivers Meche and Tista on certain conditions. Relevant papers were sent to the Rajah through Captain Baree, who signed a treaty on Company's behalf at Titalia on February 10, 1817 A.D.

"Apparently though it appeared that the Treaty was a boon to Sikkim, in reality it put fetters on Sikkim. Under its article

3, Sikkim lost its freedom of action as it was agreed to submit to arbitration of the company all dispute with Nepal and other neighbouring states. On the other hand, the company gained the rights of trade up to Tibetan border and also the right to get fugitives, such as dacoits, revenue defaulters, etc., arrested and handed over to the British authorities. Another gain that the British had, was that the expansion of Nepal to the East was stopped and lastly British saw to it that Sikkim developed into a real and strong buffer state between Bhutan and Nepal.

"Two months later after signing the Treaty at Titalia, Lord Moira granted to Sikkim a small territory of Morung. In the sanad dated April 7, 1817 in this connection, the Rajah of Sikkim was mentioned as 'a feudatory of British Government.' This clearly shows that the company had secured suzerain rights over Morung."

"A Treaty with the Raja of Sikkim in 1817 placed Sikkim under British protection and the acquisition of Darjeeling in 1835 brought the British into close contact with the day to day politics of Sikkim."

### *Sikkim-British Relations Since 1839*

"In 1839, the British East India Company obtained Darjeeling from Sikkim as a health resort. After the defeat of Sikkimese troops by the British an Anglo-Sikkimese treaty was signed in 1861, by which Sikkim's sovereignty was recognised, thus establishing it as a buffer state between British India and Tibet. In 1890, an Anglo-Chinese Convention was concluded whereby China acknowledged the special relationship of the Anglo-Indian Government, with the kingdom of Sikkim, while at the same time the boundary of Sikkim and China was defined. A British Political Officer was subsequently appointed to assist the Chogyal,"

### *John Claude White's Visit to Sikkim*

In the month of November 1887, John Claude White paid his first visit to Sikkim. He accompanied Mr. Paul, who had

been sent from Darjeeling to try and induce the Maharaja at Sikkim to return from Chumbi where he had retreated for some time. The Maharaja was requested to spend some time in his own country. White's first destination was Rhenok, a small village only a couple of miles beyond British territory. Mr. White went to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim. He had to walk most of the way from Rhenok to Gangtok, a distance of about twenty miles. His first halt was at Pakhyong. In 1888, Pakhyong became the headquarters of Lintchi Column where the 13th Rajputs were encamped for several months. Pakhyong is a pretty little spot lying just under the saddle where the road commences the last descent before the final climb to Gangtok. The hillside was covered with woods of chestnut and orchids in profusion.

Here he met Kartok Lama, a son of the Khangsa Dewan and head of the Kartok monastery, situated a few hundred feet above Pakhyong. He was a headstrong youth, not with a good record. Mr. White was always on good terms with him.

### *White's Stay in Gangtok*

On reaching Gangtok, the tents were pitched on the ridge, close to the Maharaja's palace. The area was then covered with jungle. Later on this site became the site of a flourishing bazar, with post and telegraph office, a rest-house, charitable hospital and dispensary, many large and flourishing shops, including that of the state bankers.

Mr. Paul returned from Gangtok to Darjeeling. Mr. White, with a guard of Gurkha police remained for another fortnight in Gangtok. During this period, the Maharaja neither returned to Gangtok nor sent some communication. So Mr. White went to Darjeeling.

His stay at Gangtok acquainted himself with the headmen and notabilities of Sikkim, who paid their respects to Mr. White. The two brothers, the Khangasa Dewan and Phondong Lama, men of strong individuality and character met him. They were men of wisdom and good sense. The two brothers practically ruled the country for years during the prolonged absence of the Maharaja in Chumbi.

Phondong Lama, the younger brother, was the ruling spirit of Sikkim. He personally knew everyone; constantly travelled over the country, collecting information at the first hand. He was ever ready to give advice as well as assistance, and, though always generous in his manner, was unfailingly strong and just to all. He was universally liked and respected.

His elder brother Dewan was of a more retiring nature and remained more in the background but his influence was equally felt and the administration during the absence of the Maharaja was carried in the joint name of the brothers.

The third gentleman whom Mr. White met was Poorbu Dewan. He was one of the courtly men. He was a true gentleman in mind and manners; a staunch and loyal friend. He had a fund of information which made him an excellent adviser. He possessed also an unusual amount of tact and good sense. He did much probably more than any one else, towards the welfare and advancement of the State of Sikkim. He was a man looked up to and respected by all and whose advice was eagerly sought and followed. Mr. White says, "In camp, he was an excellent companion and many a pleasant hour have I spent sitting by a camp-fire talking to him."<sup>10</sup> The deaths of Phondong Lama and Shoe Dewan meant a great loss to Sikkim. There was no one to fill the places of these men. Phondong Lama died at the age of sixty-eight and Shoe Dewan at the age of fifty-five.

White also met many other men. Some of them were old Gangtok, Tassithing and Entche Kazis. The Kazis belonged to the leading families who had come into the country in the retinue of the Sikkim Rajas. They belonged to the old school and did not care much for anything. They were great drunkards. They were otherwise good-natured and were ready to do anything that was wanted of them to the best of their abilities.

In the expedition of 1888, John Claude White was attached to Entchi column. He made a night march under Colonel Michell of the 13th Rajputs from Pakhyong to Gangtok. The Maharaja and Maharani had again fled to Chumbi over the Yak-la Road. Mr. White and his colleagues stayed in the palace



of Maharaja which was vacated by him. The Maharaja and the Maharani were forced to come back to Gangtok and Mr. White met both of them for the first time.

*Thotab Namgyal*, Maharaja of Sikkim, was a man of about twenty-eight years of age, of medium height, typically Mongolian in appearance and much disfigured by a bad hare-lip. He was a man of indolent disposition. His inclination was to live in retirement and aloof from the worries and troubles of the Government of Sikkim. He was mentally weak and easily led by others. He was entirely under the influence of Maharani, his second wife.

While the negotiations with China were still going on, the British had started tightening their grip over Sikkim which they felt was slipping gradually out of their hands. They called the Rajah to Kalimpong and put him under house arrest along with his family and appointed Mr. J. C. White as their Political Officer at Gangtok in June 1889. Although his job was to keep watch on Tibet and Bhutan, he became the defacto ruler of Sikkim in course of time and specially after signing the Anglo-Chinese Convention. John Claude White overhauled the Sikkim administration by appointing a Council to guide the ruler and took away most of the executive powers from him. The Maharaja was granted a small retinue and a monthly allowance of Rs. 500 only for his expenses.

When the treaty was signed with the Chinese, *Thotab Namgyal* was allowed to return to Gangtok. On reaching Gangtok the Maharaja found that it was not the same Sikkim which he had left. Political Officer J. C. White had become the real executive. He resented it so much that he removed himself from Gangtok and preferred to stay at Robdenchi (Nabey) to avoid the sight of White.

"Disgusted by his life and a series of misfortunes the Maharaja and Maharani started on a pilgrimage of Buddhist monasteries of Sikkim. Claude White kept an eye on his movement, and while he was at Walong, near Tibetan border, the Nepali officials who bore a permanent grudge against the Maharaja for his anti-Nepali immigration views, took him virtually under

custody and though treated him well handed him over to the Nepali-Sikkim border."

He was once again removed from Sikkim and kept in solitary confinement for sometime at Ging, below Darjeeling and then moved on to Kurseong. Here he was kept under strict surveillance for two years along with the Rani and some attendants.

It was during the period of captivity that in 1893 Tashi Namgyal, father of the last Chogyal Palden Thondup was born. During this period, the British Government also deposed him without announcing the same publicly.

"In 1894, the Maharaja made representation to the Commissioner, Nolan of Bengal in person and apologised for his past conduct and promised for better behaviour. Consequently he was removed to Darjeeling in 1895, with slightly more freedom of movement. After staying for sometimes there, the Maharaja and Maharani were allowed to move to Gangtok."<sup>11</sup>

V. H. Coelho in his book *Sikkim and Bhutan* (on page 21) says: "Maharaja Thotub Namgyal was at this time virtually under the supervision and control of Claude White who had been appointed as the first British Political Officer in Sikkim in 1889 and had been invested with the authority of a defacto ruler."<sup>12</sup> V. H. Coelho further says on page 45 in his book *Sikkim and Bhutan* :

"Some attempts to set up an administration in Sikkim on lines, as a departure from primitive feudalism, started with the first British Political Officer, John Claude White in 1889. He tried to lay a basic administrative structure and to regulate the taxation system. He appointed clerks to be in charge of various departments. The revenue system was revised. The evils of landlordism largely controlled and several departments established to deal with health, education, public works and so on. Monastic estates were brought under control."<sup>13</sup>

The Maharani was the daughter of a Tibetan official in Lhasa. She had a striking personality. She was extremely bright and intelligent and was well-educated. She knew Tibetan well. She talked well on many subjects and was a good writer.

On the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, she personally composed and engrossed in beautiful Tibetan characters the address presented by Sikkim Raj.<sup>14</sup> Mr. White says, "She had a great opinion of her own importance and was the possessor of a sweet musical voice, into which she could, when angry, introduce a very sharp intonation. She was always interesting, whether to look at or to listen to and had she been born within the sphere of European politics, she would most certainly have made her mark, for there was no doubt that she was a born intriguer and diplomat. Her energies were unfortunately, but naturally owing to her Tibetan origin, misdirected for many years, until finding out her mistake. She frankly confessed she had been in the wrong and turned her thoughts and attention to matters which should lead to the welfare of her husband's state. Her common-sense and clear-sightedness were on many occasions of the greatest assistance to me in my task of administering and developing Sikkim and when I led various schemes before her, she was quick to see the material advantages to be obtained and gave her support accordingly"<sup>15</sup>

#### IV

##### CLAUDE WHITE AS POLITICAL OFFICER IN SIKKIM

At the conclusion of the hostilities, the Government of India made a proposal that John Claude White should remain in Sikkim, with the title of Political Officer and administer the affairs of the State of Sikkim. He was to be assisted by a Council. The Council consisted of the following personnel : (1) Chief Dewans ; (2) Lamas and Kazis.

John Claude White worked as the President of the Council. He was an Engineer. Now he had to change his profession. For him, it was absolutely a new line. As years passed, he grew to love the work.

The Government of India decided to shift the Maharaja to Kurseong, in the Darjeeling district. Kurseong was to be his new residence. Mr. White conveyed the Government orders to

Their Highnesses—the Maharaja and the Maharani. The Maharaja remained silent but the Maharani abused Claude roundly. She called him every name, she could think of. She lost her temper entirely. She got up, stamped on the floor and finally turned her back on him.

With the departure of the Raja and Rani to Kurseong, the task of reorganizing Sikkim was started by Claude.

### *Role of Claude in Sikkim as a Political Officer*

Chaos reigned everywhere in Sikkim. There was no revenue system in Sikkim. The Maharaja used to take what he required as he wanted from the people. There were no Courts of Justice, no educational system for the younger generation, no police and no public works. The task before Claude was really a very difficult one but it was fascinating. The country was a new one and everything was in the hands of Claude.

The first step taken by Claude was appointment of a Council. He formed a Council and he selected the following persons :

- (1) The Khangsa Dewan and the Phondong Lama : The two brothers.
- (2) The Shoe Dewan.
- (3) Lari Pema.
- (4) Gangtak.
- (5) Tassithing.
- (6) Entchi.
- (7) Rhenok Kazis.

All these members of the Council helped him.

Another task before him was of raising a revenue. He surveyed different districts and assessed them per acre. The survey was completed in a period of five years and a basis for taxation and revenue was established. The forests were placed under Government control. Excise was introduced. The revenue was raised from Rs. 8,000/- annual to Rs. 22,00,000 a year. More land was brought under cultivation. Immigration was encouraged by giving land on favourable terms to the Nepalese.

During his period of office, he visited every corner of Sikkim.

He was accompanied by Shoe Dewan and Phondong Lama. He became acquainted with every headman and almost with every villager. He gave an interview to everybody. When asked for, people brought before him every case that required settlement. Cases of murder, which was extremely rare, or grievous hurt, were brought to Gangtok for trial. He found the people very hospitable. Phondong Lama and Shoe Dewan became his best friends.

### *His Relations with Lamas*

The monasteries and the Lamas enjoyed great power in the land of Sikkim. In their case also, he made certain settlements and arrangements. He did this with the assistance of Phondong Lama, chief priest in Sikkim and Lari Pema of the Pemionggtchi monastery. The rights of Lamas were carefully recognised. In later years, when he accompanied the Tibet Mission to Lhasa, they invited him as they had known many good things about him from Sikkim Lamas.

When White had come to Sikkim there were no roads. There were a few bad and difficult tracks. With the increase in revenue, Claude constructed several roads. The torrents were bridged and in a few years it was possible to ride from one end of Sikkim to another. It was now possible to cart goods from Siliguri, the terminus of the Northern Bengal State Railway, sixty-four miles away, to the door of the Residency at Gangtok. Firewood was carted into the Bazaar from five miles off on the two different roads. It was very difficult for him to make both ends meet. He had to spend on roads and bridges, buildings, education, police, the domestic expenses of His Highness and his son, the Kumar. There was also the imperative necessity of creating a reserve fund for unforeseen contingencies and the question ever present was how was money to be found.

In a mountainous country like Sikkim, anything but the smallest land tax was impossible to levy and even that was difficult. The forests which were a source of wealth were too remote. The difficulty of the carriage of timber was unsurmountable. Excise could increase to a certain extent but that



could not continue.

John Claude White exercised constant care and economy and thus could accomplish much. Each year's budget showed an increase of revenue and thus met the increased expenditure. Repairs of roads were a constant headache as the roads were washed off because of the heavy rains up to 240"

### *Mineral Wealth of Sikkim*

Sikkim is rich in minerals. The question was of finances. The State of Sikkim had no funds and the British Government refused to allow the introduction of foreign capital. In 1906, Claude secured the sanction from the Government for the exploration of mineral wealth. Claude gave permission to some business firms in the field of mining. Iron, tin, zinc, aluminium, cobalt, arsenic, graphite, lead, gold and silver were found in Sikkim. Copper was in abundance and natives took it out by primitive fashions. Copper was in large quantities but it was scattered in different parts. Claude says, "Amongst the advantages of this new departure of the introduction of the European capital, there will be an increase of European residents in the Country, with a consequent greater circulation of money, a new field for the employment of labour, a greater demand for local supplies, with the probability of increased facilities of transport bringing new markets within reach for produce and greater still, the utilization of the latent water power with all its unforeseen possibilities."<sup>10</sup>

## V

### THE ANGLO-CHINESE CONVENTION (1890)

This Convention defined the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet. The Tibetans ignored the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890. They uprooted the boundary pillars erected with painstaking care by Mr. White, the British Resident in Sikkim and in the neighbourhood established an outpost at a spot which was named as Giagong.



The Tibetans had retired from Giagong temporarily in 1902 as a result of the personal intervention of Mr. White. But with his departure from the spot, they had returned. And in July 1903, the Thangu extended its shelter to three men who were destined to play a part of paramount importance in moulding the future of the Eastern Himalayas. These men were Colonel Young-husband, Mr. Claude White and Captain O'Connor, the first the leader and the last the interpreter of the subsequent mission to Lhasa. "The Anglo-Chinese Convention was eventually signed at Calcutta on March 17, 1890. Article I of the Convention determined the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet and by Article III both the Govts. engaged reciprocally to respect the boundaries and to prevent acts of aggression from the respective sides of the frontier."<sup>17</sup> [Quoted from : Foreign Department, secret external proceedings Nos. 218-247, March 1890]

### *Development of Trade and Markets*

The Sikkim Trade Treaty was signed in 1890. In 1894, Claude formally opened the trade mart at Yatung. Claude was ceremoniously received by the Chinese and Tibetan officials. He was taken to a gorgeous tent in which tea was served to him. Mr. F. E. Taylor of the Imperial Chinese Customs Service was amongst those present in Chinese official dress. The Chinese officials were the Popen or Frontier officer, Wang-Yen-Ling, Tu-His-hsun, the Officer Commanding of the troops and the interpreter Yee-Shan. The Tibetan officials present were U. Depon, the Tsedun Tenzing Wangpo and Kutzab Lobzang Tenzing. The conversation between Claude and these officials was limited to the exchange of compliments.

White says, "It was my first experience of the Chinese official and I have since always found him of the same type outwardly exceedingly polite and punctilious but behind one's back deceitful and cunning, intent on the Chinese policy of delay and most difficult to bring to the point in any negotiations."<sup>18</sup>

Claude White soon found that the Trade Mart was perfectly useless for the purpose and that the articles agreed to in the Treaty regulations had not been carried out in any way. The

Chinese had posted *sentries* on the gate and no one was allowed to come to the 'Mart' to buy or sell any goods. Extrorionate rents were charged for 'shops' which were no better than hovels. The climax of the incident is that all the Tibetans refused to acknowledge the Treaty which had been signed on their behalf by the Chinese. Claude says, "I sent in a report to Government and stayed on in Yatung for about ten weeks, waiting for a reply and during that time, I saw a good deal of both Chinese and Tibetans. The Chinese are well-known sticklers for etiquette and it was a curious commentary on the position, that as their officials lived just beyond Pema in the Chumbi valley within Tibet, I was not allowed to return their ceremonial visits. No person, save Tibetans or Chinese, not even Mr. Taylor, himself a Chinese official, was allowed to pass the gateway in the wall. Even the Amban, when he paid his official call on me, waived his right to a return visit. The position of the Chinese in Tibet was certainly a very curious one or at any rate made to appear so."<sup>19</sup>

Thus Claude was not at all sorry when his stay came to an end. Jawaharlal Nehru's experiences of Chinese were similar to those of John Claude White.

### *Building of a House in Sikkim*

John Claude White had to face the problem of accommodation as a Political Officer. He wanted to build a house for himself. Masons and carpenters were conspicuous by their absence. Stone for building had to be quarried from hillsides and trees were to be cut down for timber. He managed to get sufficient space for the house, with lawns and flower-beds round it. He got the services of a Punjabi, Motiram. But he found it difficult to furnish the house and to find a staff of servants for his own need.

Sikkim was a place where Claude had to be entirely self-supporting. He managed to bring cattle and established his own dairy for milk, butter and cheese. He brought a flock of sheep for the supply of mutton, a poultry yard and he engaged a baker to bake bread. He employed a blacksmith who taught to shoe the ponies.

*A Garden-Party by Claude*

John Claude arranged a garden-party and invited the Maharaja and Maharani, with the members of the Council and all the Kazis and headmen with their wives and families. Some of the invitees emptied the sugar basins and even took the spoons and the liquor glasses. Mr. Claude and Mrs. Claude specially attended on the Maharaja and Maharani.

When the house was under construction, the Maharani came several times to see how it was getting on.

*The Garden*

The garden was a great joy to both Mr. Claude and Mrs. Claude. It was a lovely garden, the lawns had always a beautiful green even in winter, with masses of flowers. In early spring, the lawns were fringed with daffodils, primroses, polyanthus, daisies and pansies. By the end of April, the roses were in full bloom. His office looked beautiful in these surroundings.

His work took him much on tour and away from Gangtok and he had to spend many pleasant days in monasteries. He, with Mrs. White, spent a week at Tumlong to see the Lama dance and annual ceremony of the worship of Kanchanyanga. The dance was allegorical and lasted for three days. The dances represented the several phases of worship. The dancers frequently changed their costumes and reappear in new characters.

Travelling in those early days was not easy, especially in the rains when the rivers were in flood and the roads were very bad. In the rains there was always the danger of bridges being swept away and of landslips.

*The Delhi Durbar*

In 1902, Sikkim was aroused from its quiet sleepy existence by an intimation from that His Excellency, the Viceroy Lord Curzon, would send an invitation to the Maharaja to be present at the Imperial Durbar to be held at Delhi on January 1, 1903, to celebrate the accession of His Majesty the King Emperor. The

Maharaja accepted the invitation but at the last moment deputed his son and heir Sidkyong Tulku, the Maharajkumar, to be his representative.

For many months Claude was busily engaged in preparations for the function. The reception tents of Sikkim were delightfully picturesque and unusual. They were made after Tibetan fashion with an elaborate design in applique cloth of many colours on the roofs. The sides were decorated with the eight lucky signs : (1) The Wheel of Life, (2) The Conch Shell, or Trumpet of victory, (3) The Umbrella, (4) The Victorious Banner, (5) The Golden Fish, (6) The Lucky Diagram, (7) The Lotus, and (8) The Vase.

The Maharajkumar took the decoration entirely in his own hands. He drew out the designs, selected the colouring and superintended the whole of the details of the manufacture with the best possible results.

The drawingroom was hung with old Chinese and Tibetan embroideries and the tents were arranged in a semi-circle.

In the absence of the Maharaja, the Maharajkumar was allowed to represent his father and was accorded his salute of 15 guns, cavalry escort and military guard on the camp. He also took his place in all the great state functions, riding an extremely fine elephant, lent for the occasion by the British Raj in the Chief's profession, beside the Maharaja of Coochbehar and presenting his address to the King Emperor through the Viceroy at the great Durbar. The speech was very characteristic. It was : 'May his Majesty King Edward VII, from the time of occupation of this golden Throne, exercise powers over all these worlds, may he live for thousands of cycles and ever sustain all living creatures in joy and happiness'.<sup>30</sup>

It was the Kumar's first attempt at playing host to a number at European guests and he did it very nicely with Mrs. White's help. He looked carefully after the comfort of the eight or ten guests staying in the camp and always delighted to welcome people to lunch or dinner.

Mr. Claude and Kumar spent most afternoons on the Polo ground, where the Polo was magnificent and where all the Delhi World congregated.

It was the first occasion on which a ruler of Sikkim had been present at a state function. The late Maharaja received an invitation to the first Durbar, held by Lord Lytton in January 1877 but he did not accept it. It was much to be regretted that His Highness the present Maharaja did not attend on this occasion but to the Kumar and the Kazis and headmen had a revelation of the extent of British supremacy and the assemblage of so many chiefs and Rajas from North, South, East and West had come together to pay homage to the King Emperor, was an object lesson, brought immediately home to them at the greatness of the Indian Empire.

In 1904, when Their Royal Highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Wales were about to visit India, the chiefs had to assemble in Calcutta. Mr. White approached the Government of India on the subject of issuing invitation to the Maharaja and Maharani of Sikkim. The proposal was accepted. The Maharaja and Maharani of Sikkim were in charge of Captain Hyslop, 93rd Highlanders and thoroughly enjoyed their visits. It opened their minds and did them an immense amount of good. They much appreciated the honour paid to them by the Prince and the Princess. His Royal Highness exchanged visits with the Maharaja as well as with the Tashi Lama and the Tongsa Penlop while the Princess received the Maharani at Government House. It was their first visit to Calcutta. It was full of interest and surprise to them. They saw many things they had hitherto no conception of. At the conclusion of their visit, they made a pilgrimage to Buddha-Gaya and then returned to Sikkim much more contented with their lot than they had formerly been.

The visit was certainly a success. The Government of India decided to keep up more friendly relations with their neighbour on this hitherto little-known frontier.

Mr. White reached the age of 55 in October 1908 and so retired from the British Government service. Thus ended his twenty years' connection with the little State of Sikkim.



## VI

## A MAKER OF PRESENT SIKKIM

Claude White had requested the British Government several times to give him the assistance of an officer as a general assistant but unfortunately he was not given any such assistance. The Government of India always regarded his request as superfluous. His assistants, Messers D'Connor Bailey and Campbell, were placed in charge of Tibetan trade affairs and their duties had nothing to do with Sikkim. Claude worked single-handed as the Political Officer of Sikkim and looked after State Police, Revenue, Forests, Education, Excise, Agriculture, Public works, Judicial department, in addition to the whole of the Tibetan and Bhutan correspondence and negotiations. He managed all the affairs of Sikkim with office staff under Mr. Hodges, the superintendent and the services of the State Engineer. Mr. Hodges served Claude for eighteen years and he maintained his office always in a state of efficiency and good order. The Engineers, Mr. Dover, Douglas Freshfield and Mr. Hickley, served him well.

Thus Claude's work in Sikkim was tremendous as the first Political Officer. Modern Sikkim owes much to the pioneering work of Mr. John Claude White. He did everything for Sikkim's prosperity. He was the maker of modern Sikkim. He introduced the industries of apple-growing, cloth-weaving, carpet manufacture and mining. The Maharajkumar had spent a couple of years in England. He was educated in the Pembroke College, Oxford. The Maharani was his step-mother and the relations between Maharajkumar and Maharani were always bitter. Claude desired a good successor to him for giving proper guidance to the Maharajkumar.

Claude left Sikkim after rendering a meritorious service of twenty years for Sikkim and while leaving Sikkim, he had a keen desire to revisit Sikkim to see the progress of Sikkim. He should be designated in the truest sense of the term, 'The father of modern Sikkim'. It is because of his pioneering work and diplomacy in Sikkim and afterwards by a long process that on



May 16, 1975, "Sikkim joins the Indian Union as its 22nd State with the President, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, giving assent to the Constitution (Thirty-eighth Amendment) Bill passed by Parliament on April 25, 1975".<sup>21</sup>

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# THE SOURCES OF THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY SIKKIM

DR. A. C. SINHA

(North Eastern Hill University, Shillong)

## I

THE PROBLEMS of regionalism, sectionalism and nationalism may be seen in terms of socio-cultural integration. The intensity of socio-cultural integration may vary from nation to nation depending on the plurality of the ethnic groups. In such a plural society if a student of history desires to construct a trait index of empirical possibilities of nationalism he will have to examine ideal and operative values and norms, actual behaviour and the degree of behavioural inter-dependence among the sub-national communities. This leads us to what Clyde Kluckhohn terms as the "regularities on three dimensions— in actuality, in expectation on the part of participants and in the operative mode" (Kluckhohn C., 1963). In other words, one has to examine actual, expected and ideal behaviour patterns in cultural and social theory. Normative rules (or cultural norms) may be identified through laws, mores, customs, folkways, taboos, conventions and etiquette. These 'norms' define roles, and roles organize into associations, which in terms constitute institutions, and the institutions of a group form a society. In this view, the normative and particularly norms represent a blueprint for social interaction' (Bierstedt, R., 1963).

Historian and anthropologist because of the dictates of their methods, place a special value on the unique event in all its uniqueness. Unlike their traditional concerns with 'past periods' and 'primitive' peoples, while the former are turning to the illiterate, the socially obscure, the peasant, the worker the immi-

grant and to sources such as oral tradition. The latter, in words of Margaret Mead, has recently been 'adding observations of actual behaviour to his former principal reliance on descriptive words'. Both specialists endeavour to handle wholes and relate structure function and change (synchronously by historian and diachronically by anthropologist). Besides the thematic specializations 'the crux of the methodological differences between historian and anthropologist can be summed up in the two words "documents" and "informant" (Mead M. 1968). Both these have their own problems, while many a time the document suggests expected and ideal behaviour devoid of the actual interaction the latter's reliance on the informants' actual behaviour may be lost in the routine chores of the localized happenings. The hazards of the research techniques may be epitomized in the aphorism, never accept a document at face value (history) - data speak for themselves (an ethnographic reporting from informants). There is another way to look at the anthropological literature. Once documented even the most sketchy ethnography on a non-literate people becomes a part of the 'document' to be useful for the future historians. In this way anthropologist and sociologists of to day will be qualified historians for to-morrow. Social history of Sikkim by character will be sectional history examining the historical contexts of the various ethnic communities. In the similar way, history of Sikkim will be regional in character, as part of the larger Himalayan community and Indian nation.

With the above preface when we turn to the social history of contemporary Sikkim, certain issues arise for resolution. The first issue is what do we mean by contemporary Sikkim? The obvious answer will be that those who inhabit Sikkim, are the constituents of contemporary Sikkim. Which are the socially significant communities inhabiting the present Sikkim? The answer may be given in a chronological order in this way, the Lepcha and related Kirat stocks such as Mijir, Sherpa, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, etc., the Lamas immigrant Tibutia, the industrious and perseverant *Paharia* (Nepali) peasants and commercial and mercantile Deswal and Marwari. In this way the contemporary Sikkim is a plural society<sup>4</sup> with multiple ethnic stocks interacting with each other. With a view to uncovering the inter ethnic

social intercourse, we have broadly divided the history of the Sikkimese protectorate into four phases : (i) the pre-theocratic phase (pre-1642), (ii) the medieval theocracy (1642-1888), (iii) the colonial feudalism (1889-1947), and (iv) the transition to modernity (1948-1972)\* (Sinha, A. C., 1975). A fifth phase of the democratic participation may be added to the above so that the present may be tied to the past in a logical linkage. In the above mentioned study we used some historical material for analysing the social formations in the past and present. However, in our view, social history of Sikkim is yet to be written.

## II

Contemporary Sikkimese society retains some vestige of the lamaist theocracy (Sinha, A. C., 1975), and frontier feudalism\* (Lattimore, O., 1962). Though I presume the history of a people as a complete set in itself the first two phases of the Sikkimese history mentioned above may be ignored for the present analysis. I would have even discarded the phase of the colonial Feudalism, because it takes us almost a hundred years back. But this can be done only at the cost of some very useful historical materials which could uncover the basic economic structure and social formation of the present Sikkim. The administrative set-up, land tenure, social banking, settlement of the *Paharias* from Nepal and Darjeeling, large-scale terraced paddy cultivation, organized cash cropping and the present settlement pattern of Sikkim may be traced back to the introduction of the British colonial administration in 1888. There are documents in shape of the published materials and official records in the archives. In case we have a desire to examine the earlier settlement pattern and land tenure system, inter-ethnic boundaries and inter-tribal relations, and introduction of the money economy in a systematic way, the following sources cannot be overlooked :

(i) records pertaining to the land settlement, rents collections, registration of the cases, adjudication of the cases, maintenance of the jails, etc., available with the *Kazis*, *Tichadars* and five monasteries with private estates ;

(ii) the papers—Khatas—of financial transaction, traditional banking and ware-housing and trans-Himalayan trade transactions available with the M/s. Jethraj Bhojmals and the Bhotia trading families ;

(iii) personal records/documents available with Rhenock Kazis and Laxmidas Pradhan families (Rai Bahadur B. B. Pradhan, Gangtok, and Motichand Pradhan, Kalimpong) pertaining to the Rhenock clash between the Kazis and the *Paharias* ;

(iv) personal correspondence among the Newar families of Sikkim to their counterparts in Darjeeling, Calcutta, Biratnagar and Kathmandu ; and

(v) the records available with the local administrative headquarters in eastern Nepal and Kathmandu pertaining to settlement and migration of the Nepalese in Sikkim.

The phase of transition to modernity in Sikkim was initiated in mid-1940's. This was because of two developments ; one, many of the Sikkimese worked as soldiers during the Second World War and saw the political turmoils in different parts of the world, where they were stationed. Some of the Sikkimese were employed in the British colonial administration outside Sikkim. These people saw the rising political awakening in parts of India where they were employed. Two, the movement for the Indian independence organized by the Indian National Congress served as the model for political organization. All these resulted into emergence of small localised groups (*Mankind*, February, 1960) organised for social work and movements against the local zamindars. These local groups were fused into one to form the Sikkim State Congress on December 7, 1947 with their by now, famous three points demands (Sinha, A. C., 1975, Basnet, L. B., 1974). This was practically the Sikkimese branch of the Indian National Congress with her tri-colour flag and broad ideology. However, in her operation this party lacked organizational sophistication and reliable financial source. But this was undoubtedly a mass political party cutting across the ethnic boundaries. The vested interests in the power structure of Sikkim got the Sikkim National Party (Basnet, L. B., 1974) organised to counteract the



growing influence of the Sikkim State Congress. The movement organised by the Sikkim State Congress against the feudal oppression led not only to training the political functionaries, but also gave birth to a crop of folk-literature which is an immense source of information on the working of the then socio-political system and organisation of the protest movement.

Besides the recorded documents, published books and articles on the political movement in Sikkim there are several sources which have not been fully tapped to uncover the character of the movement. It is indeed a boon that many of the activists are alive. Their memoirs, reminiscences, personal sacrifices and gains, their status during the last three decades, documents (personal or organizational) and their over-all individual contribution to the political articulation may be assessed. Secondly, there are many individuals available who could provide us with their experiences, memorials, letters, testimonies, decorations, awards and other recognition as functionaries of the then formal power structure. Thirdly, in the erratic feudal days, the lamaseries played a significant role. In fact, there were five main monasteries which had rent-free estates for their up-keep. The records from these monasteries and memoirs of the lamas may be of great historical use. Fourthly, one of the reasons why the Sikkim State Congress movement got a universal support was the prevalence of the *Kalobhari* (black-load), *baitha* (squatting at officials residence so that their travel baggage may be manually transported) and *Jharlangi* (a compulsory partly paid labour), the various types of un- (or little) paid labour. How this practice was in actual operation can profitably be recorded even today. Muleteers, such as Netuk Tshering and porter contractors like Harkabahadur Sardar and a number of individuals can easily be located, who used to perform duties of the compulsory labour. Fifthly, the political experience of twenty-five years provides two obvious political conclusions : one, the intense court intrigues and eternal party-factionalism ; two, a systematic political death of the Nepalese mass leaders. One of the possible reasons for that is the misplaced priority of nation-building efforts. This is the opportune time to record the individual actor's analysis of such

failures. This may profitably be pursued by contacting many of the courtiers of the ex-Chogyal whose association with the then cultural policy of the state is fairly well-known. Lastly, manuscripts, folk-literature and political experiences of the political loners and dissenters like Mrs. Ruth Lepchani and Lal Bahadur Basnet may be documented before it is too late.

### III

The phase of the democratic participation in Sikkim began with anti-feudal struggle in 1972, reached its fulfilment in 1975 with Sikkim's integration with the Indian Union and is passing through various stages of experiments. Contemporary Sikkim has inherited various social, political, economic and ethnic problems from the previous regime. The recently extended democratic culture has further heightened the horizon of expectations and aspirations. Along with these, the various groups now have legally become an inalienable part of the Indian nation. Many a time, this new identity vis-a-vis ethnic particularism create dilemma. This dilemma may be put into an inverted position if we ask : Who are the Sikkimese ? The answer to the above query uncovers a broad spectrum. Logically speaking, Sikkim as a unit State of the Indian Union may be taken as the commonwealth of the Sikkimese ethnic communities. In case this is acceptable, there is need for a new cultural policy with an emphasis on accommodation and consensus. The source materials for this phase are scattered around and one has to wait for sometime so that the process gets established.

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# THE LAND OF DRAGONS

M. K. SHAZLI

(*Shri Shivaji College, Kandhar, Maharashtra*)

## I

THE SINO-INDIAN border conflicts, and Indo-Pak clashes, about the middle of the present century, have naturally attracted the attention of the historians. They have written a lot on the subject during that period, but with a brief historical background, going back to the last decade of the nineteenth century. However, it becomes more essential and urgent to delve deep into the past history of the entire Himalayan region. This will help us to establish good relations with the people of the Himalayas. It will again help us to probe into the psychological make-up of these land-locked people largely forgotten by the world.

I confine these lines to trace out the life-line, under historical background, of *Druk Yul*, the land of Dragons, a land-locked country with an area of 18,000 sq. miles, in the heart of the Himalayas. The northern frontier is formed by great snow-clad ranges in which are number of peaks that soar above 2 000 ft. Bhutan is a mountain-paradise, where peace and beauty guard the secret of perpetual youth.

Sir Basil Gould, Political Officer in Sikkim, 1935-45, rightly compared Bhutan with the Swiss countryside. Bhutan is away from the cold, rain-soaked hills, clothed with deciduous forest, which overlook the plains of Bengal and Assam. This geographical atmosphere and environment made the Bhutanese a strong, hardy, and well-built race, with a strong martial spirit. They fought continuously among themselves, and made constant predatory raids on the neighbouring countries.

The early history of Bhutan is rather untraceable and obscure.

The Government of Bhutan itself declares that there is no much in writing about the early history of Bhutan. Much of the official annals were destroyed by fire, flood and earthquakes, particularly after the destruction of historic Dzong in Punakha, the ancient capital of the country by fire.

## II

In the earliest period, according to Sanskrit sources, and the travelogue of Yuan Chwang, the northern limits of Kamarupa (Modern Assam) included Bhutan. Under the tutelage of Kamarupa, the Indian Chiefs once ruled Bhutan up to seventh century A.D. Bhutan was separated from Kamarupa, after the death of Bhaskar Varma of Kamarupa in 650 A.D.

Harshavardhan extended his rule up to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, and fully touched the southern borders of the Himalayan States, but never troubled himself to peep into the mountains and the people living there. But it cannot be denied that in spite of the lack of internal political unity, or organisation, Bhutan had worked her way and had been an independent state even before eighth century A.D.

The second phase of the history of Bhutan relates to Tibetan attempt to capture Bhutan, but it ended in 841 A.D. This happened in the period of the first King of Bhutan, Drukaa Rimpoche (the peerless one). He is also known as Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. Originally a Tibetan, he consolidated his temporal and spiritual powers. The Tibetans, however, settled in Bhutan, making the second ethnic element of the population of Bhutan and occupying mostly the western districts.

Even the medieval Bhutan was stated to be a wholly closed and land-locked country in mountains. The trade route in the India-Bhutan-Tibet triangle was at Cooch Bihar on the Indian plains. The first Europeans who made contacts with Bhutan were the Portugese and they did it from the land of Porduka. They presented the first Dharma Raja of Bhutan, an appliance to see the distant objects clearly and some cannons. Ralph Fitch has

described sixteenth-century Bhutan, being in the same undeviating medieval pattern, then to be found in the rest of the world.

The first Muslim invasion was made by Muhammad bin Bakhtiar Khalji, undertaken probably in 1205 A.D. But his expedition extended only to one of the southern valleys of Bhutan, and he was compelled to retreat by the staunch archers of Bhutan. After the Tibetan rule, there was no organised political power in Bhutan, except the nominal temporal control of some Lamas from Tibet.

In the sixteenth century A.D. Naranarayan, ruler of Cooch Bihar, captured some Bhutanese territories. In the seventeenth century A.D., Ngawang Namgyal Dycon Dorji came to Bhutan with his religious activities, and established himself as a theocratic ruler under the title of Shabdrung Rimpoche, who is also known as Dharma Raja in India. The notable work of Ngawang Namgyal is that he created a new functionary under the title of Deb Raja or Dug Desi, and entrusted the secular administration of the country, to this officer. He himself worked as Dharma Raja or supreme spiritual authority. Thus he was a blend of qualities of a saint, warrior, reformer, and administrator.

After the death of Shabdrung Bhutan became a theatre of civil war and foreign invasions. Gushri Khan invaded Bhutan in 1644-46, but had to retreat. In 1710 Lhabzang Khan, a Mongolian King, attacked Bhutan but was repulsed. The civil war over succession to the position of the Shabdrung Rimpoche, called the intervention of the Tibetans in Bhutan in 1729-30. After 1730 Bhutan came under China through a treaty between Bhutan and Tibet. In 1770 Bhutan invaded Sikkim and captured nearly a greater part of Sikkim. But at the same time Bhutan had good relations with the rulers of Nepal.

The British, for the first time appeared in this area in connection with a dispute between Cooch Bihar and Bhutan, which cropped up when Bhutan put up a candidate for the throne of Cooch Bihar, against Nazir Deo. At that time Nazir Deo sought for help from the East India Company. In this clash, under Captain Dennis Morrison, the Bhutanese were beaten back. This



happened in the mid-eighteenth century. Here was another confrontation with the British in 1773. By a treaty with Cooch Bihar Warren Hastings brought Cooch Bihar under his control and drove the Bhutanese out of Cooch Bihar. Then conflict was terminated by a treaty with Bhutan in 1774. Then, again, Bhutan and British confronted each other on the question of Assam Duars. Though the Duars belonged to the Bhutanese, the British wanted to extend their sphere of influence in this region. It generated tension and resulted in the outbreak of war in 1865. It ended with the conclusion of peace Treaty of Sinch la.

It is in the beginning of twentieth century that Ugyan Wangchuck was declared as Maharaja of Bhutan, who had played a prominent patriotic role during all the disturbed relations with British India. This Wangchuck dynasty still preserves its independence.

Very few writers, excepting John Claude White (1909), Earl of Ronaldshay (1923), R. B. Pemberton (1839), Ashley Eden (1865), Celements R. Markhan (1879) and two or three writers in the second half of the twentieth century, have come out to record the events of Bhutan.

### III

The most important aspects of Bhutan are: Firstly, Bhutanese, though under the peaceful teachings of Buddhism, qualified themselves as a martial race and greatly attached to their country. It is also to be noted that the people of Bhutan consisted of original descendants called Shanchops, immigrants from Tibet, and Nepalese settlers. It is again noticeable that Buddhism was brought to Bhutan by two Indian teachers, namely, Padma Sambhava and Sanktiraksita, who established the first Buddhist Monastery B-Sam Yas, about thirty-six miles south-east of Lhasa in the left bank of Gtsang-po (Mighty Brahmaputra) in the eighth century A.D. Both the cults of Buddhism—Hinayana and Mahayana—flourished in Bhutan. The Nepalese practised Hinduism, and Muslim traders also settled in Bhutan

peacefully. The State Religion is Buddhism. It will not be out of place to mention here that nearly in all the Himalayan States, the theocratic Governments proved to be more secular, more tolerant than the democratic governments, existing in the neighbouring areas. For instance, a syncretic form of Hinduism encompassing much, that is, Buddhist or animist in derivation, therefore, is the dominant religion and cultural form throughout the major portion of Nepal. This does not mean of course that non-Hindus have always accepted the imposition of Brahmanic Hindu values willingly or that the synthesizing process has been painless. The first Nepali code of Laws was the product of several reputable Indian Brahmins, who were invited to Nepal by King Jayastithi Malia in the fourteenth century A.D. The two grand Islamic Schools, Sirajul-Uloom at Jhnanagar, and another at Khatmandu, are running smoothly with 500 boarders and a grand mosque.

It is to be noted that in Bhutan, one never finds the communal conflicts, communal disturbances, disintegration, or casteism or caste feelings, etc. And yet the country is called an Abode of Dragons, Druk Yul, and no communal rancour has ever polluted the long history of Bhutan. This tiny country on the snow-clad peaks of Himalayas still preserves the basic values of life—honesty, simplicity and humanity. I conclude my paper with the verses of an Urdu Poet, Dr. Sir Shiekh Mohammed Iqbal, on the Himalayas :

اے عمالیہ! داستانِ اس وقت کی کوئی سنا      مگس آجائے، انسان جب یاد میں تیرا  
 کچھ بتا اس سیدھی سادی زندگی کا ماجرا      دماغ جس پر غارِ رگبتِ بکلت کا نہ تھا  
 ہاں دکھا دے اے تصور پھر وہ مع رشام تو  
 درڑ بیچھے کی طرف اے گردِ شبنم ایام تو

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# SIKKIM—EVENTS LEADING TO ITS MERGER WITH INDIA

DR. P. RAGHUNADHA RAO  
(*Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati*)

## I

SIKKIM, the twenty-second state of India, is situated in the eastern Himalayas. It is spread below Khangchendzonga, the third highest mountain peak of the world, and bounded by Tibet in the north, Bhutan in the east, Nepal in the west and West Bengal in the south. It has an area of 7,325 sq. k.m. and a population of about two lakhs. The name Sikkim is derived from two Limbu words 'new palace'. The Tibetans called it 'Denzong' or the land of rice. The Lepchas, the original inhabitants of Sikkim, called it 'Nye-mae-el' or heaven.

The population of Sikkim is composed mainly of the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalese. The Lepchas were the original inhabitants of the state and number about 17,000. Their origin is doubtful but they are supposed to have come from the east, along the foot of the hills, from the direction of Assam and upper Burma.

The next group of people to enter Sikkim were the Khambas, popularly known as the Bhutias. They were immigrants from Tibet. They number about 16,000. They profess Buddhism and are generally very strong, hardy and good-tempered.

The Nepalese immigrants now far outnumber the Lepchas and the Bhutias. They are almost all Hindus by religion. At present they number about 1,50,000. They are, on the whole, "a steady, industrious and thrifty people".

Very little is known about the early history of Sikkim. The Lepchas, as mentioned earlier, were the original inhabitants of

Sikkim and they claim to be autochthons of Sikkim proper.<sup>1</sup> In the beginning of the seventeenth century A.D. three Lamas came from Tibet into Sikkim to convert the people to their doctrines. They found at Gangtok one Penchu Namgyal, the great-grandson of Guru Tashe, a Tibetan noble. The Lamas selected and invested the young man as the Gyalpo or the king of Sikkim. This event took place in 1641 at a place called Yoksam. The kingdom of Sikkim in those times was very extensive and included the Chumbi Valley of Tibet and the Darjeeling district of West Bengal.

For the next 150 years after the accession of Penchu Namgyal to the Sikkim throne, the succession passed from father to son. During the reign of the third Gyalpo, Chador Namgyal, Sikkim was overrun by the Bhutanese in 1706. Tibet then came to the rescue of Sikkim and drove out the Bhutanese from the country. The ruler of Sikkim, in gratitude, founded the great monastery at Pemiongchi.

During the reign of Gyurma Namgyal (1717-1734) Sikkim lost the province of Limbuana to Nepal. In the time of the sixth Gyalpo, Tenzing Namgyal (1780-1790), the Nepalese invaded Sikkim and overran the country as far eastward as the Tista river including the Morung or the lowlands at the foot of the hills.<sup>2</sup> Tenzing Namgyal died in 1790 and was succeeded by his son, Chugphui Namgyal (1790-1861). Shortly after his accession to the throne, war broke out between Nepal and Tibet, in course of which the Nepalese established themselves firmly in Sikkim, south and west of the Tista.<sup>3</sup>

According to a tradition, the Chinese after expelling the Nepalese from Tibet called on the Sikkimese to show their boundaries. Chugphui Namgyal, being a minor and a fugitive, could not come forward to protect the interests of his kingdom. The Chinese thereupon gave the region west of the Tista to Nepal. The Chola-Jelap range was made the northern and eastern boundary of Sikkim. The Chumbi Valley was given to Tibet.<sup>4</sup>

British relations with Sikkim commenced in 1814-15 when the East India Company, which had brought substantial parts of India under its control, was involved in a war with Nepal. The

opening of relations with Sikkim became a political and a military necessity. The alliance with Sikkim seemed to promise to the Company three advantages, viz., (1) to facilitate communications with China *via* Tibet, (2) to prevent Nepalese-Bhutanese intrigues against the Company, and (3) to level an attack on the Gurkha flank. In view of these advantages the Company induced the Sikkim Raja to bring a large number of troops against Nepal and promised him help to recover his territories lost to Nepal in 1780.

The Nepal War came to an end in 1815 when the Company and Nepal signed the Treaty of Segauli. Lord Moira (afterwards Marquess of Hastings), the Governor-General of India, decided to restore to Sikkim a part of the territory wrested from Nepal. By this gesture he wanted to establish the Company's relations with Sikkim on a firmer footing with a view to checking the Gurkha expansion towards the east. The Company agreed to hand over the territory between the rivers Mechi and Tista to Sikkim on certain conditions. The Raja accepted the conditions and signed a treaty with the Company at Titalia on 10 February, 1817.

The Treaty of Titalia marked the beginning of the end of Sikkim's independence. Under Article Three of the Treaty, Sikkim lost its right of independent action in its disputes with Nepal and other neighbouring states. Further, it began to lose territory bit by bit. In 1835 it was forced to give to the Company Darjeeling as a 'gift'. By this cession, though the Company gained a bit of territory, it lost the goodwill of Sikkim. Consequently, the relations between the Company and Sikkim worsened. In December 1849 the Raja arrested a Company's servant named Campbell when he wanted to cross into Tibet. Taking advantage of this incident, the Company launched a military expedition against Sikkim in 1849. As a result of it, the Company gained an additional territory of Sikkim to the extent of 640 sq. miles. The Company did not annex the whole of Sikkim because of the political expediency of maintaining the kingdom as a separate entity. Sikkim was not wiped out of the map because of its strategic situation between Nepal, Bhutan,



Tibet and the British dominion in India. But, interestingly enough, the non-annexation of the whole of Sikkim did not result in the increase of British influence there. This was due to the strength of the Tibetan faction in Sikkim. Though Tibet did not actually intervene on behalf of Sikkim during the crisis, it granted the Raja an allowance when the Company stopped his Darjeeling grant. It may be mentioned here that the Company had granted the Raja an yearly allowance of Rs. 6,000 after the cession of Darjeeling. The gesture increased the Tibetan influence so much that towards the end of 1860 the Government of India was forced to undertake another military expedition into Sikkim to re-establish its position. The expedition was an unqualified success. The power of the Maharaja<sup>5</sup> was completely reduced and he submitted himself to the mercy of the Government of India. The latter decided not to annex Sikkim on various political, military and economic considerations. The Government of India was aware that the annexation of Sikkim would result in a "long, tedious and most expensive war" with the Himalayan states like Bhutan and Nepal, since they were likely to make a common cause with Sikkim due to their dread of the "proverbial acquisitiveness" of the British. Secondly, the Government of India was afraid that by annexing Sikkim outright, it might find itself in a quarrel with Tibet or China, since all the Himalayan states had close connections with them. Thirdly, trade considerations weighed heavily with the Government of India in its policy towards Sikkim.

From the early fifties of the nineteenth century the importance of Sikkim, as an easy trade route to Tibet and lands beyond, was recognised. The rapid development of the tea industry in the neighbourhood of Darjeeling convinced the Government of India of the need to tap the great tea markets of Tibet. Therefore, it took care not to spoil its trade prospects with Tibet by antagonizing China by annexing Sikkim. Lastly, the non-annexation of Sikkim was dictated by internal considerations. The memory of the Indian Revolt of 1857 was still fresh in the mind of the Government of India. It was afraid that the annexation of Sikkim might have adverse political repercussions elsewhere in India.

The Treaty of 1861 was very significant. It brought Sikkim

under the control of British India. Sikkim lost all freedom of action and became a *de facto* protectorate of the Government of India. The British also gained substantial advantages without having the need to annex Sikkim. In spite of all this the Treaty suffered from two weaknesses. The first was the non-definition of the *de jure* status of Sikkim, and the second was the privilege granted to the Maharaja under Article Twenty-two to stay in Chumbi for three months in a year. These two weaknesses manifested themselves within three decades and were mainly responsible for the subsequent difficulties of the Government of India with Tibet and China.

In 1886 the Tibetans advanced 13 miles across the Jelap Pass and occupied a place called Lingtu on the Darjeeling road. The Maharaja of Sikkim, Thothab Namgyal (1874-1914), who was then staying in the Chumbi valley of Tibet, supported the Tibetan action and declared that the land in occupation really belonged to Tibet. So in March 1888 the British sent an expedition and expelled the Tibetans from Lingtu. The news of the Tibetan defeat alarmed the Chinese and convinced them that if they failed to come to terms with the British, they might lose their influence in Tibet. The Maharaja of Sikkim and his family members who had since returned to the capital were taken to Kalimpong where they were kept under house arrest. The Government of India appointed a political officer and entrusted to him the administration of Sikkim.

In March 1890 the Anglo-Chinese Convention was signed. Article Two of the Convention categorically admitted Sikkim as a protectorate of the Government of India. H. M. Durand, Secretary to the Government of India, emphasized this point in an Official Note (21 May, 1889) :

Sikkim is part of the Indian Empire... It can have no dealings with foreign powers to whose eyes India should be all red from the Himalayas to Cape Comerin.<sup>6</sup>

The Convention of 1890, by settling once for all the status of Sikkim as the protectorate of the Government of India, had removed the main weakness of the Treaty of 1861. The second

weakness of the Treaty of 1861, relating to the privilege of the Maharaja to stay at Chumbi for three months in a year, was also removed.

Within a decade after the signing of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 the Government of India had consolidated its authority in Sikkim to such an extent that it was able to meddle with impunity in important affairs concerning the royal family. The temporary deposition of Thothab Namgyal in 1892 was intended to warn the Maharaja that he should not disobey the orders of the Government of India. Similarly, the recognition of the Maharaja's second son, Sidkeong Namgyal, as successor-designate to Sikkim and later of Tashi Namgyal, ignoring the claims of the eldest son, Tchoda Namgyal, twice was intended to demonstrate that no man suspected of anti-British proclivities could rule Sikkim and that the succession was the ingift of the paramount power. The silent acquiescence of the royal family and the people in the decisions of the Government of India indicated the nature and extent of British authority in Sikkim.

In 1903 the Government of India exploited the disputes concerning Sikkim-Tibet boundaries to open Tibet. The success of the Younghusband Expedition in opening Tibet and forcing it to sign the Lhasa Convention on 7 September, 1904 had solved all the British difficulties regarding the status of Sikkim and its boundary with Tibet. Tibet had not only recognised the protectorate of the Government of India over Sikkim but had also confirmed the Sikkim-Tibet boundary as laid down in the Convention of 1890. China confirmed the Lhasa Convention by signing the Peking Convention with Britain in 1906. The influence of these two Conventions on Sikkim was far-reaching. In the first place, the *de jure* status of Sikkim as the protectorate of the Government of India had received international sanction. In the second place, the Government of India by demonstrating its power in Tibet was able to consolidate its position in Sikkim. It no longer had any troubles either from the Maharaja or from the outside powers like Tibet and China for the remaining period of the British rule in India. Its power and influence over Sikkim ensured the smooth succession to the throne when Maharaja

Thothab Namgyal died on 11 February, 1914. His son, Sidkeong Namgyal, whom, as we have already noted, the Government of India had recognised as successor, ignoring the claims of his elder brother Tchoda Namgyal, became the Maharaja. He was, however, not destined to rule for a long time. He died unmarried on 5 December, 1914 and was succeeded by his younger brother, Tashi Namgyal, who ruled the kingdom till his death on 2 December, 1963.

With the accession of Tashi Namgyal to the throne of Sikkim, the British relations with that kingdom entered into a happy period. The Maharaja remained a loyal friend of the British till the end of their rule in India. The Government of India was so much satisfied with his loyalty that it conferred on him many honours and distinctions like K.C.S.I. and C.I.E. Till 1946, the kingdom was free from communal disturbances and political agitations. However, after 1947, the kingdom was rocked by many political agitations.

## II

The Indian independence gave fillip to the democratic movement in Sikkim. A number of organisations like Praja Sammelan, Praja Mandal, Praja Sudhar and Swatantra Dal were formed in different parts of the kingdom during the latter half of 1946. These organisations were more or less welfare bodies without any policy, programme or ideology. The need for a political party was strongly felt as the people became restive under the autocratic regime of the Maharaja. Therefore, on 7 December, 1947, the representatives of the people from all over the country and the representatives of the Praja Sudhar of Gangtok, the Praja Mandal of Chakhung and the Praja Sammelan of Temitarku, met for the first time at Gangtok. Their united deliberations gave birth to the Sikkim State Congress—the first political party of Sikkim. Tashi Tsering and C. D. Rai were elected President and Secretary respectively. The other important leaders who took active part in the formation of the party were Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Khangsarpa of Chakhung, the present Chief Minister of

Sikkim, Capt. Dimik Singh Lepcha, D. D. Gurung, Chandra Das and Senam Tsering.

The leaders of the party led a deputation to the late Maharaja of Sikkim, Sir Tashi Namgyal, and presented him a memorandum containing three demands :

1. The abolition of landlordism ;
2. the formation of the interim Government as an essential precursor of the responsible government to come ; and
3. the accession of Sikkim to India.<sup>7</sup>

It is significant that the leaders of the new party had pointedly asked for accession to India. Tashi Tsering and C. D. Rai went to New Delhi towards the end of 1948 and met Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, and B. V. Keskar, Deputy Minister of External Affairs, Government of India, and apprised them of the political situation then obtaining in Sikkim. They further made a request for the representation of Sikkim in the Indian Parliament on the ground that "it would be undemocratic not to send the Sikkim people's representative in the Indian Parliament which controlled and guided the external affairs". When Nehru replied that there were constitutional difficulties for Sikkim's representation in the Indian Parliament, the Sikkim leaders requested him to see that the difficulties were removed. However, in March 1950, the Indian Government advised the Sikkim Congress leaders to keep "the demand for accession with India in abeyance".<sup>8</sup>

The State Congress within a short time of its formation became a power to reckon with. Its influence penetrated into all sections of the population including the government officials. The agitation for popular government gathered momentum. In the first week of February 1949 the Congress started a state-wide movement, called "No-rent campaign" or Satyagraha, demanding implementation of land reforms. Twelve leaders of the Congress were arrested. However, the "No-rent campaign" was suspended on the advice of Hareshwar Dayal, the Political Officer of India in Sikkim.<sup>9</sup>



## III

After the lapse of British paramountcy, a standstill agreement was signed between the Governments of India and Sikkim on 27 February, 1948, whereby "all agreements, relations and administrative arrangements as to the matter of common concern existing between the Crown and the Sikkim State on 14 August 1947 were deemed to continue between the Dominion of India and the Sikkim Darbar pending the conclusion of a new agreement or treaty". Subsequently the two governments resolved to take certain steps to strengthen their relations.

## IV

After the dismissal of the first popular ministry, the Sikkim State Congress intensified its agitation for popular reforms. In 1953 the Maharaja created a legislative body called the Sikkim State Council, consisting of 20 members, 14 elected and 6 nominated. Later the number of elected members was increased to 18. Of these 7 were to be elected by the Nepalese, 7 by the Bhutias and the Lepchas, 1 each by the Sangha (monks), the Thongs and the Scheduled Castes. One seat was general. The President of the Council was nominated by the ruler.

The distribution of the seats was not fair and equitable. The Nepalese who constituted about 70 percent of the population were given 7 out of the 18 elected seats. At the same time the Lepchas and the Bhutias who together constituted only 25 percent of the total population of Sikkim were given the same number of seats as the Nepalese. Further, elections were very complicated. A candidate in order to get elected must not only secure the highest number of votes from his community but also a minimum percentage of other community votes. All the political parties of Sikkim, with the exception of the National Party, agitated against this system and demanded 'one man one vote' system on the pattern of India.



## V

Maharaja Sir Tashi Namgyal who ruled Sikkim since 1914 died on 2 December, 1963. He was succeeded by his second son (the elder son died in an air accident during the Second World War) Palden Thordup Namgyal. On 16 March, 1965, Thordup Namgyal changed his Indian status of 'Maharaja' to the Tibetan-sounding status of 'Chogyal'. The status of his American wife, Hope Cooke, was changed as Gyalmo.

## VI

After the Chinese attack on India in 1962, the attitude of Sikkim towards India was changed. On 15 June, 1967, three Executive Councillors of Sikkim issued a joint statement wherein they stated that *Sikkim gained her Sovereign status on the 15th August 1947 when India achieved her independence from the British rule.*

The joint statement of the Executive Councillors was endorsed by the *Sikkim Herald*, the bulletin of the Publicity Department of the Government of Sikkim, when it pointed out that "Sikkim attained its independent status and rights on 15 August 1947 when India attained her independence and entered into a new relationship by signing a new Treaty". The bulletin also pointed out that Sikkim "aspires to breathe independently".

## VII

From 1967 onwards the Chogyal, egged on by his American Gyalmo, made many vain efforts to raise the status of Sikkim to that of an independent monarchy. He made no secret of his ambitions. The local papers described the Chogyal and the Gyalmo as their Majesties and the heir-apparent was called the Crown Prince. The address on Palace writing paper was given as Sikkim, *via* India.<sup>10</sup> In December 1968 the Chogyal created an "External Affairs Committee" consisting of his Secretary

Jigdal Densapa, the Finance Secretary Khunjang Sherab and Madan Mohan Rasaily. All the three were well-known Indo-phobes. They maintained that the 1950-Treaty had outlived its utility. Rasaily felt that India should sponsor Sikkim for help from FAO, ECARE and ILO. He declared : "We want to associate with small but developed countries with problems like ours."<sup>11</sup>

### VIII

In February 1973 General elections were held in Sikkim for the State Council. The National Congress contested the elections on a 13-point manifesto. The important points of the manifesto were the abolition of the communal pattern of voting, the securing of fundamental rights, responsible government, and written constitution, and the strengthening of friendly relations with India.

The Chogyal, presumably advised by his American Gyalmo, tried to bring about a change in Sikkim's relations with India by using the National Party better known as the Chogyal's Party. The Party's Manifesto released in November 1972 pledged that it would strive for a status for Sikkim equal to that of neighbouring Nepal and Bhutan, which are members of the United Nations. Another important point of the manifesto was the slogan "LO-MEN-TEMPO" (exclusive rights of the Bhutas and the Lepchas). Out of the 18 elective seats the Party won 11 seats (7 Bhutia Lepcha seats, 2 Nepali seats, 1 Sangha seat, 1 Scheduled caste seat).

The victory of the National Party was made possible by the inequities of the Sikkim electoral system. The National Congress alleged that elections were rigged in favour of the National Party. The allegation was not without foundation. At the time of counting, hundreds of votes in very neat bundles in favour of a particular candidate of the National Party were discovered in the ballot box. When the counting agents of the other parties brought this matter to the notice of the Returning Officer, no action was taken. On the other hand, the counting agents were physically

assaulted by some of the followers of the National Party in the very presence of the Government officials.<sup>12</sup>

To protest against such 'blatant oppression and injustice' the National Congress and the Janata Congress took out a procession in Gangtok on 4 February, 1973, but they were not allowed to use a mike on that occasion. This alone is enough to prove 'the grave injustice and oppression' prevailing in Sikkim at the time.<sup>13</sup>

The National Congress sources also alleged that the elections of February 1973 were master-minded by the Americans. The Director of the U.S.I.S. in Calcutta, Holbrook Bradley, was in Sikkim before the elections. After the victory of the National Party, Peter Buleigh, Political Officer of the U. S. Consulate in Calcutta, visited Gangtok and met the Chogyal.<sup>14</sup>

The Chogyal appointed a six-member Executive from among the elected members of the State Council. Of the six, four belonged to the National Party and the remaining two were drawn from the National Congress and the Janata Congress. On 26 March, 1973, all the four members belonging to the National Party were sworn in at Gangtok. The other two were not present at the swearing-in ceremony.

The two main opposition parties, namely, the National Congress and the Janata Congress, intensified their agitation for electoral reforms on the basis of one-man one-vote. The Chogyal promised electoral reforms provided the two parties supported his demand for the revision of 1950-Treaty with India. The Chogyal tried to sell this idea to Krishna Chandra Pradhan, the Janata Congress leader, through one of his trusted supporters in the 'Sikkim Youth Study Forum'. It was also alleged that the Chogyal tried to achieve his aim in consultation with some powers that were hostile to India.<sup>15</sup>

The opposition knew perfectly well that any loosening of the relationship between India and Sikkim would only result in the perpetuation of the authoritarian rule of the Chogyal. So they rejected the Chogyal's offer with the contempt it deserved. Thereupon the Chogyal adopted strong armed measures towards the opposition leaders and on 27 March, 1973 arrested K. C. Pradhan under the Sikkim Security Rules for a speech which, it was alleged, was likely to inflame communal tensions.

## IX

The arrest of K. C. Pradhan precipitated a crisis. On 28 March a big demonstration took place in Gangtok protesting against his arrest. The leaders of the Janata Congress and of the National Congress formed a Joint Action Committee (JAC). It is noteworthy that its leader was Kazi Lhendup Dorji who was relieved of his portfolio of the Minister for Agriculture.

The JAC launched an agitation for the abolition of communal voting system and the introduction of political reforms. It also demanded immediate release of K. C. Pradhan. The agitation gained momentum and spread all over the state. The JAC issued an appeal to the people of Sikkim to continue the struggle against "oppression and open exploitation". It also issued a 16-point demand which included the abdication of the Chogyal.<sup>16</sup>

The movement became very popular and, within a short time, the anti-government demonstrators overran the eight police posts at Rangpo, Rhenok, Rangali and other places. Thousands of volunteers poured into Gangtok with the declared objective of surrounding the palace. Fearing reprisals from the Chogyal, the leaders of the JAC, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Nahakul Pradhan and Bim Bahadur Gurung took refuge in the office of the Indian Political Officer at Gangtok and appealed to the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to intervene and "save the innocent people of Sikkim from a ruthless repression unleashed by the Durbar to perpetuate the feudal privileges against the demands for democratic rights".<sup>17</sup>

The Chogyal was taken aback at the turn of the events. He, at first, requested the Government of India to send its army personnel to man the police stations in Sikkim and maintain law and order. Later, when the administration collapsed completely, he requested the Indian Government to send one of its senior officers to take over the administration of the whole of Sikkim.

At Gangtok, senior Nepali officers called on the Chogyal and urged him to accept the demands of the JAC. Kazi Lhendup Dorji, however, declared that "the stage for negotiations between Sikkim Rulers' representatives and the Council on solution of political problem has passed".<sup>18</sup> He demanded that the Gov-

ernment of India should take over the entire administration of Sikkim. The Government of India acceded to the request of the Chogyal and the JAC by taking over the administration of Sikkim. B. S. Das, Commissioner of Delhi Municipal Corporation, was appointed as the Chief Administrator of Sikkim.

Meanwhile, the JAC demanded the abdication of the Chogyal. Kazi Lhendup Dorji met the Indian Political Officer in Sikkim, K. S. Bajpai, and also Avatar Singh, the Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, who paid a visit to Gangtok on 8 April. After meeting these officials Dorji said that the Government of India should make up its mind whether to support the people of Sikkim or the ruler whose administration was "stained with the blood of unarmed people, demanding democratic reforms". After the Indian take-over of the administration, the JAC on 9 April announced the suspension of the current phase of the agitation. But the JAC made it clear that it was not prepared to have "useless, infructuous, bipartite parleys with the discredited Durbar".<sup>19</sup>

The Government of India, by readily taking over the administration of Sikkim, wanted to fulfil its dual responsibility of safeguarding the legitimate interests of the Sikkim people and also discharging its Treaty obligation to the Chogyal by maintaining the internal and external security of the state.

All these years the Government of India had overrated the Chogyal's local importance and catered to his whims and fancies. The events of March-April, 1973 exposed the hollowness of the Chogyal's pride and his real position. He had to be saved from the wrath of his own people.

## X

On 8 May, 1973, an agreement was signed at Gangtok between the Chogyal, the leaders of the political parties representing people of Sikkim and the Government of India.<sup>20</sup> The agreement, among other things, provided for a Legislative Assembly for Sikkim elected on the basis of adult franchise, an Executive

Council responsible to the Assembly and safeguards for the minorities.

Under the agreement, India was to send an administrator (Chief Executive) to ensure democratization, good administration, communal harmony and social development. The elections for the new Assembly were to be held within a few months. The Assembly was to be elected every four years on the basis of adult franchise under the supervision of the Election Commission of India.

The new Assembly was to be set up on a one-man one-vote system but with a provision that no single group from the Bhutias, the Lepchas or the Nepalese would hold a dominant position. The Assembly was given powers to propose laws and adopt resolutions on fourteen subjects including finance, economic and social planning, education and agriculture. But it had no power on four topics, namely, the Chogyal and the members of the ruling family, matters before the courts, the appointment of the Chief Executive and the members of the Judiciary, and issues which were the responsibility of the Government of India. Only the palace establishment and the Sikkim guards remained directly under the Chogyal. A significant feature of the agreement was the omission of the police department in both the list of subjects to be dealt with by the Assembly and that showing the subjects outside its purview.

The agreement is important for many reasons. For the first time in Sikkim's history, the people, represented by popular forces, became the acknowledged participants in the political process. Secondly, it had frustrated the Chogyal's ambition to make Sikkim a sovereign state. It not only reiterated India's control over defence and foreign relations of Sikkim, but also made it clear that the Chogyal was subordinate to New Delhi. In any dispute between the Chogyal and the Indian nominated Chief Executive, New Delhi's ruling would be final.

## XI

After the signing of the agreement, life in Sikkim once again became normal. In August the two important constituents of the



JAC, the Janata Congress and the National Congress, met at Namchi and decided to merge themselves to form a new party called Sikkim Congress. Kazi Lhendup Dorji was elected President and K. C. Pradhan as Vice-President. The new party decided to have a tricolour with blue star in the centre as its flag and the ladder as its election symbol.

On the basis of the tripartite agreement elections were held from 15 to 19 April, 1974, under the supervision of a Chief Election Commissioner deputed by the Election Commission of India. The 32 seats were divided among the Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepalese communities. The Sikkim Congress contested all the seats. The pro-Chogyal National Party contested only five seats. The real fight was between the Sikkim Congress and the 26 Independent candidates, who came together at the last moment under the name of the 'United Independent Front'.

The Sikkim Congress in its election manifesto tried to allay the fears of the minority communities of the Bhutias and the Lepchas by declaring that "the Sikkim Congress shall introduce a special programme for the safeguard of the interests of the minority communities and backward classes in Sikkim".

The manifesto made special reference to land reforms by declaring that Sikkim Congress would ensure "the immediate abolition of private estate", meaning thereby the abolition of the private estate of the Chogyal. The manifesto further declared that "no land must be left untilled and no tiller left without land".

Lastly, the manifesto spelt out the attitude of the Sikkim Congress towards India in these words :

The Sikkim Congress will seek to strengthen the bonds that already exist with the Government and the people of India. The Sikkim Congress is aware that the democratic development of Sikkim has benefited from the interest shown by the Government and people of India. Although for historical reasons our progress towards democracy has been slower, we also aspire to achieve the same democratic rights and institutions that the people of India have enjoyed for a quarter of a century.<sup>21</sup>

The Sikkim Congress won a land-slide victory by securing

31 of the 32 seats in the new Assembly and polled about 70 percent of the votes. All the 15 Assembly seats reserved for the minority were also captured by the Sikkim Congress with its own Lepcha and Bhutia candidates. The Party President, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, was returned unopposed from the Tashiding Constituency. The Congress won a notable victory when its candidate wrested the Sangha (monasteries) seat. In this functional constituency, there were about 2,000 Buddhist Lama voters representing 57 recognized monasteries. This was the first time that a candidate other than the one representing the Monasteries Association and backed by the National Party had won the Sangha seat.

The National Party and the United Independent Front tried India-baiting by constantly referring to the enlarged 'Indian presence'. The National Party which secured 11 out of the 18 elective seats in February 1953 could now secure only 1 seat. Along with the United Independent Front, it could secure only 30 percent of the votes polled. The Independent Front in May 1974 formed themselves into the Prajatantra Party. The Party adopted anti-India stand and began to spread concocted stories about collusion between the Sikkim Congress and the Government of India to harm the interests of Sikkim. But its vile propaganda failed to make any impact on the masses of Sikkim.

## XII

The new Sikkim Assembly met for the first time on 10 May, 1974, and it was addressed by the Chogyal. The next day the Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution reiterating the determination (earlier embodied in the agreement of 8 May, 1973) to further strengthen the relations between India and Sikkim.

As far as the Chogyal was concerned the resolution stated that the "sole functions of the Chogyal cannot be more than those of the constitutional head of the government of Sikkim". The Assembly also requested the Indian government to depute a constitutional expert to give a legal and constitutional frame-

work to the objectives of its resolution.

The Government of India, at the instance of the Chogyal, deputed Rajagopal, a constitutional adviser to draft the constitution providing for a democratic set-up for Sikkim. By 20 June, 1974, a Bill which later became the Government of Sikkim Act, 1974, had been drafted. Earlier, the Chogyal visited New Delhi and stayed there from 12 to 16 June. He met Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Foreign Minister Swaran Singh and gave them the impression that he was agreeable to a discussion of the new Constitution by the Assembly. He had even stated that he would himself address the Assembly.<sup>22</sup>

The Assembly session was fixed for 20 June, 1974, to discuss the Government of Sikkim Bill which provided a constitutional framework for Sikkim. But the Chogyal, who had earlier assured the Indian Government that he would co-operate in pushing through the new constitution himself, played truant. At the last moment he declined to deliver his customary address to the Sikkim Assembly. Not only that, the Chogyal's palace guards, their family members and the pro-palace government officials attempted to prevent the members from entering the Assembly building. The irate Sikkim Congress wanted to bring thousands of its own supporters for a confrontation but was persuaded with great difficulty to hold its hand. It was only after the demonstrators had dispersed that the Assembly at 10 O'clock in the night unanimously adopted the resolution endorsing the Government of Sikkim Bill.

Under the new Act, the Chogyal would continue to enjoy the honour, position and other personal privileges hitherto enjoyed by him.

The new Act provided for a popularly elected Assembly which would adequately represent the various sections of the population. No single section of the population was allowed to acquire a dominating position mainly by reason of its ethnic origin. The elections to the Assembly were to be held on the basis of 'one man, one vote'.

The Act clearly stipulated the subjects in respect of which the Assembly could make laws. They included education, pub-

lic health, excise, press and publicity, transport, bazars, forests, public works, agriculture, food supplies, economic and social planning and land revenue.

The kingpin of the new constitution was the Chief Executive who was to be a nominee of the Government of India. He was to be the President of the Assembly and perform the functions of the Speaker. His main task was to see that the responsibilities of the Government of India in relation to Sikkim were duly discharged.

The Act provided for a cabinet. There was to be an Executive Council (Council of Ministers) with one of the members designated as Chief Minister and others as Ministers. The Chief Minister and other Ministers were to be appointed by the Chogyal on the advice of the Chief Executive. The members of the Council of Ministers were to be responsible to the Assembly.

Another important feature of the Act was the independence of the Judiciary. The judges were to be independent in exercising their judicial functions. These functions were to be discharged in accordance with law.<sup>23</sup>

Article 30(C) of the Act sought participation and representation for the people of Sikkim in the political institutions of India.

### XIII

The Assembly adopted another resolution on 20 June which called for "fuller participation of Sikkim in the economic and social institutions of India". It requested the Planning Commission to include the planned development of Sikkim in the plans it prepared for the economic and social development of India and associate officials from Sikkim in such work. The resolution also wanted the facilities provided by the financial institutions in India (banks, life and general insurance companies) to apply to the Sikkimese.

The other important aspects of the resolution were : the

Government of India should provide special facilities for the students from Sikkim in the institutions for higher learning in India. Candidates from Sikkim duly qualified should be eligible for employment in the Public Services of India (including all-India services) on par with the citizens of India. The people of Sikkim should enjoy the fundamental rights available to the citizens of India under Part III of the Constitution of India.<sup>24</sup>

The fact that the constitution bill and resolution on closer links with India were passed without dissent showed that the people of Sikkim wanted that feudalism must end, and also favoured greater integration with India. But the Chogyal boycotted the Assembly and tried to block the reforms that were introduced only after prolonged consultations between him and his advisers. Keen observers of Sikkim politics felt that the Chogyal adopted the delaying tactics in giving assent to the new bill with the hope to split the ranks of the Sikkim Congress legislators. The Chogyal visited Delhi with an alternative constitution designed to preserve his monarchical rule in constitutional garb.<sup>25</sup>

The Chogyal returned to Gangtok on 1 July. Earlier, he told the press correspondents at the Calcutta airport that he was not contemplating abdication. He claimed that the Constitution Bill had gone back to the Assembly for final reading and announced that he would give comments on it "after the Bill is considered clause by clause by the Assembly".

It was not clear what the Chogyal meant by this as the Assembly had considered the Bill clause by clause on 28 June and adopted it finally. After he returned to Gangtok, an emergency session of the Sikkim Assembly was convened because the Chogyal wanted to address the members and convey his view on the Bill. But the Sikkim Congress members boycotted the session as a protest against his new stance. They demanded that the Chogyal should first give his assent to the Bill. Finally the Chogyal reconciled himself to the new situation and agreed to give his assent to the Bill. Thereupon the Sikkim Congress agreed to the reconvening of the Assembly on 3 July.

The Chogyal did not attend the session but an address on his behalf was read by the Chief Executive in the Assembly.

The Chogyal said that he had gone to Delhi and had discussions with Shrimati Indira Gandhi and Shri Swaran Singh to safeguard Sikkim's separate identity under the 1950 India Sikkim Treaty which would be affected by clause 30 in Chapter Six of the Bill.

After hearing the Chogyal's views, the Sikkim Assembly unanimously adopted the Bill. All the 30 of the 32 members who were present voted for it. On 4 July the Chogyal gave his assent to the Bill. The reasons for Chogyal's sudden climb-down are not clear. Perhaps he wanted to take stock of the situation before deciding on his next move.

#### XIV

After the promulgation of the Government of Sikkim Act, the first popular Ministry was installed when a five member Sikkim Congress Ministry led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji was sworn in at Gangtok on 23 July, 1974. The 300 year-old feudal rule in Sikkim thus came to an end.

After the installation of the popular Ministry, the Chief Minister of Sikkim made two formal requests to the Government of India to take such steps as might be legally or constitutionally necessary to give effect to the Government of Sikkim Act, 1974, and to the resolutions passed by the Assembly, particularly those providing for representation of the people of Sikkim in Parliament.

The Government of India made a careful and detailed study of the Sikkim Government's requests in consultation with the Law Ministry and the Attorney General. Since the requests were of far-reaching importance, every effort was made to study them in all their ramifications. Finally, on 29 August, 1974, the Union Cabinet took the crucial decision to accord Sikkim the status of 'Associate State' of India.

When Sikkim became an 'Associate State' of India, the members of the Sikkim Assembly hoped that the Chogyal would reconcile himself to the new situation and accept his position as



the 'Constitutional head of the State' in letter and spirit. Unfortunately, the Chogyal refused to keep pace with the rising tide of democracy and tried to reverse the wheels of history.

When the Indian Parliament was discussing the 35th Amendment Bill, the Chogyal sent his brother abroad to contact certain foreign powers opposed to India in an attempt to "Internationalise" the issue and have it raised in the United Nations. The Chief Minister of Sikkim, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, as early as September 1974, had cautioned the Government of India that if democracy was to survive in Sikkim, the Chogyal must go. The Central Government counselled restraint in the hope and expectation that the Chogyal would ultimately reconcile himself to his constitutional role and adopt a more constructive attitude. When the Chogyal met the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 17 September, 1974, she assured him that his status and privileges as the constitutional head of Sikkim would not be affected by the 35th Constitutional amendment granting Sikkim's representation in Parliament. The Chogyal, on his part, made it clear that he did not challenge India's right to accede to the Sikkim Government's plea for representation in Parliament.

## XV

The Chogyal's supporters outside India sent an appeal to the U.N. Secretary-General to investigate at once India's alleged aggression against Sikkim. The Chinese delegate in the U.N.O. also made the allegation that India had "annexed" Sikkim. The Indian representative in the U.N.O., Rikhi Jaipaul, on 2 October, 1974, contradicted the Chinese allegation and said that in the days of the British rule over India, Sikkim was a princely state under the British protection, exactly like the other 500 odd princely states that were protected by Britain. The Chogyal, in a communication to the Government of India, contested the statement of Indian representative in the U.N.O. He claimed that Sikkim had never been a part of India—"geographically, ethnically or racially".

Claiming that under the Indian Independence Act, 1947,

no right of sovereignty or paramountcy and no treaty right of a protectorate over Sikkim devolved upon the then Dominion of India in its capacity of a successor to the British Crown on any part of the Indian sub-continent, the Chogyal said, "Sikkim did not sign the instrument of accession or a covenant under which the Indian princely states lost their sovereignty and identity."

In view of this, the Chogyal contended, it was quite clear that the Government of India itself did not equate Sikkim with the former Indian princely states, but thought it fit to sign a new treaty with Sikkim—the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950. "This relationship cannot be interpreted to mean that Sikkim surrendered its sovereignty and international personality or that India was granting Sikkim a special status", he said.<sup>26</sup>

Chogyal's claim that Sikkim was never a part of India need not be taken seriously. Before independence Sikkim was one of the princely states of India and the Maharaja of Sikkim was a member of the Chamber of Princes, since its inception in 1921. Sikkim was allotted a seat in the Council of States under the Government of India Act, 1935.

The "authoritative map" attached in 1930 to Volume I of the Report of the Simon Commission clearly stated Sikkim as "an Indian State" within the international frontiers of the Indian Empire. It was among the Indian states as recorded in the annual Indian Office list.<sup>27</sup>

Sir Olaf Caroe, who was the Foreign Secretary in India during the Viceroyalties of Linlithgow and Wavell, in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* of London, dated 19 December, 1974, said that it was "mischievous" to equate Sikkim with Nepal or Bhutan which were independent enough in very special treaty relations with Britain. "It was the 1935 (Government of India) Act which defined India as British India, the Indian states and the tribal areas. And, Sikkim was an Indian state." Olaf Caroe, in an earlier letter in November, had said that under the British Raj, Sikkim was a part of India.<sup>28</sup>

## XVI

The Sikkim Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution on 10 April, 1975, abolishing the institution of the Chogyal and declaring Sikkim as a constituent unit of India. The resolution declared that the Assembly was convinced that the activities of the Chogyal not only violated the objectives of the agreement of 8 May, 1973, but also ran counter to the wishes of the people of Sikkim and impeded their democratic development and participation in the political and economic life of India. Accordingly, the Assembly solemnly declared and resolved that :

"the institution of the Chogyal is hereby abolished and Sikkim shall henceforth be a constituent unit of India, enjoying a democratic and fully responsible Government."

Describing the resolution as 'historic', the Chief Minister Dorji said that it marked the culmination of the long struggle of the Sikkimese people. He said that the Sikkim Congress enjoyed an overwhelming mandate from the people but the resolution had also the support of the sole representative of the opposition in the Assembly. In other words, the resolution was unanimous.

He said that one consistent urge of the people of Sikkim since India's independence had been the attainment of full democracy there. That depended upon and was interrelated with the re-assertion of "our historic unity with India". Despite many twists and turns, the will of the people of Sikkim had progressively asserted itself and overcome the obstacles repeatedly put forward by an autocratic Chogyal.

The Assembly also resolved to submit its resolution to the people of Sikkim for their approval. The Government of Sikkim conducted a special opinion poll on 14 April, 1975. While 59,637 votes were cast in favour of the resolution, only 1,496 were against.<sup>29</sup>

Within minutes of the declaration of the result, the Chief Minister Dorji informed the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi about it. The Chief Minister and his colleagues visited New Delhi on 16, 17 April, 1975, and urged the Government of India to accept

the decision of the Sikkim Assembly and the people of Sikkim.

The Government of India decided to implement the resolution of the Sikkim Assembly by amending the Constitution. It also decided to confer on Sikkim the status of a full-fledged state.

On 23 April the Lok Sabha passed the Constitution (Thirty-eighth Amendment) Bill, 1975, to pave the way for Sikkim to become the twenty-second state of the Indian Union. The final voting in the Lok Sabha was 229 in favour and 11 against. The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill on 26 April. 157 members voted in favour and 3 against.

Several opposition members who supported the Bill had, however, reservations and doubts about the special powers given to the Governor and about the absence of any mention in the Bill of the fate of the Government of Sikkim Act of 1974, which protected the Chogyal's office and spelt out the functions of the Chief Executive.

The External Affairs Minister, Chavan, who piloted the Bill asserted that the abolition of the institution of the Chogyal was a political fact. Regarding the fate of the Sikkim Act he declared, "The political fact is that the Sikkim Act does not exist today." He said that for the Government of India to repeal the Sikkim Act was like whipping a dead horse. He, however, added that if the Sikkim Assembly wanted to repeal it, it was welcome to do so.

On 16 May, 1975, President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed gave his assent to the 38th Constitution Amendment Bill passed by Parliament on 26 April, 1975. On that day Sikkim formally became the twenty-second state of the Indian Union. The President appointed B. B. Lal, formerly Chief Executive of Sikkim, as its first Governor. Within hours, the Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court, Rajendra Sachar, administered the oath of office in Gangtok. Later, Lal administered the oath of office to Chief Minister Kazi Lhendup Dorji and his five Cabinet colleagues.

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### 3 • Tamilnadu



## ***Ancient Period***

### SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF TAMILNAD (ANCIENT PERIOD)

DR. N. SUBRAHMANIAM

(North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong)

#### I

AT THE OUTSET it is necessary that I should define the territorial extent which I call *Tamilnad* and the delimitation of the period which I call ancient. Tamilnad of the ancient period was practically co-terminus with that part of peninsular India which lies to the south of a line drawn from Mangalore to the Lake Pulicat. The north western part of this region was inhabited by the Tulus, who speak a Dravidian tongue, the northern by the Hale Kannadigas and the north eastern by the Telugus. The latter two were generically called the *Vadugas* (the northerners) by the Tamils. Naturally on the borderline a corrupt form of Tamil, known as the *Kodun Tamil* was spoken. This incidentally happened to be the entire peninsular India to the south of the southern boundary of Asoka's Empire.

As for *ancient*, I take it to be the period from proto-historic times to the end of the thirteenth century.

Judged by the normality about the sources of the Indian history, it may be said that the history of Tamilnad is most amply authenticated by source material. But it may also be remembered that sumptuousness is not necessarily the same as being satisfactory. Hence, while we have an abundance of material which can be called 'source' in one sense or another still one has numerous areas of that history for which one wishes there

was more straightforward and factual information based on chronology. Most contemporary writers considered chronology a luxury ; even the epigraphs, so numerous for the later part of the ancient period, mention datings which have to be converted to a common scale or go without dates altogether ; so that much of the chronological background that is now provided to that history is either logically deduced or merely guessed. There was no single era with reference to which events were related and mentioned, though the *Saka* era was quite popular. Even so, the mere mention of the regnal year without reference to an era makes the information imperfectly useful. Another characteristic of this source material is that literature is more abundant and directly useful for the earlier period than for the later which is illumined by more ample epigraphy and some numismatics than the literary word ; it is also of uneven provenance and is never consciously historical.

It is again a characteristic of the source material for this period that in between these two periods (the former lighted very much by literature and the latter largely by inscriptions), there is a three-century hiatus shrouded in darkness. A very general feature of the source material for this period is that there is not a single piece of literature that may be called properly 'historical'. The incidental light that is thrown on the history of Tamilnad is considerable and often dependable mostly because it is incidental. The Tamils shared with the rest of ancient India an unconcern for historical factuality and chronological recording.

## II

This history of Tamilnad of the ancient period can be and has been pieced together with the help of the following kinds of source material :

- (1) Literature—Tamil as well as non-Tamil, Indian as well as non-Indian (foreign notices) ;
- (2) Archaeology—monumental remains on surface as also buried ones ;

- (3) Epigraphy, i.e., stone inscriptions as well as copper-plates ;
- (4) Coins—local as well as foreign ; and
- (5) Legends.

Some of these sources are expressive and the rest dumb. The art of historical criticism goes a long way to solve the riddle which these sources present to the historian. He employs a few tools for the unravelling of the mysteries inherent in an incoherent mass of source material. Of these chronology is an old tool and comparative philology a recent one. Meaning has to be elicited from the sources mostly by comparative studies and the utilisation of ancillary aids to historical studies, such as anthropology, paleobotany and astronomy and even physical sciences like physics and chemistry to some extent.

Of all these sources literature and epigraphy have been the most considerable, the former helping us to know the quality of public and private lives of the people and the latter to fix, with some difficulty though, the chronology of events and the duration of reigns, etc.

The epigraphs which help us to reconstruct as well as to understand Tamilnad history are mostly to be found within the cultural limits of Tamilnad. But during the earliest period and from the beginning of the Pallava to the end of the Imperial Pandya period, we have a number of inscriptions outside Tamilnad also, which are helpful for the study of the history of Tamilnad. The Asokan edicts (Rock Edicts II and XIII), the Hathigumpha inscription, the Talagunda inscription of Kadamba Kakustha Varman, the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta, the early Pallava copper-plate grants found in the Telugu country are some such epigraphs. The eighty odd Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions found on rock-beds and other places in caves and datable to the first or second century B.C. begins the very large number of inscriptions which help us piece together the scattered bits of Tamil political and social history. The *prasastis* in Imperial Chola and Pandyan epigraphy have been the mainstay of historians of those dynasties. Copper-plate inscriptions of the early Pallava and Pandya dynasties have been very helpful in



reconstructing the royal successions and the tradition continued till very late times ; the Leyden grant and the Trivalangadu plates and the Karandai plates and very important examples.

Other aspects of archaeology, besides epigraphy, like monuments found on surface or excavated from below surface also have added to our knowledge of ancient Tamilnad. The finds at Adityanallur first discovered by Bruce Foote, the numerous megalithic sites mostly in Chingleput district, the discovery at Arikamedu of Tamil-Roman trade contacts in the early centuries of the Christian era which was made by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, and the more recent excavations at Puhar, Korkai and Uraiyur have been more or less useful in clarifying a picture of antiquity vaguely suggested by literature and legend.

Architecture and other forms of fine arts including literary attainments, contrary to usual belief are no indication of the level of civilization of any but a small elitist cross-section of a vast and pluralistic society, an overwhelmingly good part of which resided in the countryside and was not represented by the closed elitist group. It is, therefore, extremely doubtful whether any manifestation of power or prosperity on the part of this group says anything meaningful about the entire society. I suggest that the usual kind of generalisation one comes across in hastily written 'polity' books must be replaced by more cautious and qualified statements about socio-economic conditions of the people.

The literary source is most pronounced for the earlier period, i.e., before c.A.D. 600 than for the period after that ; so that the history of Tamilnad for the earlier period is rich for the social polity and rather poor in regard to our knowledge of political history—and this is due to the nature of the source material available to us. The *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* and Kautilya's *Arthashastra* were the earliest Sanskrit sources to refer to Tamilnad and it is interesting to note that all these refer only to the Pandyan country. Patanjali, Katyayana and Vatsyayana make insignificant references to Tamilnad. These are on a par with the epigraphic references mentioned above.

The classical writers from Megasthenes to Ptolemy and Pliny

and Strabo wrote during five centuries, the fourth century B.C. to the first century A.D. Their writings attest to brisk maritime trade between the Tamil country and the Mediterranean world. Megasthenes who is known to have resided in the court of Chandragupta Maurya, wrote an account of the India he saw and heard of; he mentions the Pandyas and their being ruled by women. He was the earliest non-Indian to refer to Tamilaham. Strabo of the first century A.D. refers to the Pandyan embassies to Augustus. Pliny the elder, deriving his information from earlier writers, wrote his *The Natural History* (c.A.D. 77) and mentioned therein many Tamil ports on the west coast. Ptolemy the Alexandrian geographer (c.A.D. 150) mentions Tamilian place names and the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* gives the most elaborate information about the Tamil country. *The Peutnigerian tables* (A.D. 222) speak of a Temple of Augustus on the west coast of Tamilaham. Cosmas Indicopleustes ('The man who sailed to India'), a monk wrote a travel book called *Christian Topography* in which he described the Tamil country. The *Periplus* is the most important of the above references; it corroborates much information found in the Sangam literature, both in regard to toponyms and in regard to the articles of trade between the Mediterranean and the Tamil country.

After the Graeco-Roman writers of antiquity the next important are the Chinese, whose observations have to be taken with great caution. The Chinese writer Pan Kok, who lived not later than the end of the first century A.D., mentions the Kingdom of Hountche (Kanchi). Later Chinese authorities like Fa-Hien (fifth century A.D.) and Hiuen Tsang (seventh century A.D.) give us interesting but limited information on South India.

The *Ceylon Chronicles* shed much valuable light on Tamil history. In fact it is the Mahavamsa, studied with the *Silappadikaram* which gives us a clue to an important date in Sangam history, i.e., the Senguttuvan-Gajabahu synchronism. The entire Pandyan-Ceylonese relationship which is not sufficiently clarified by the records on the mainland is lighted by valuable references in these chronicles.

The Tamil Literature of the earlier period known as the Sangam literature is the most copious and valuable source for the period preceding the sixth century A.D. The literature survives in the form of anthologies except the *Tolkappiam*, the two epics *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai* and a few texts included in the collection called the Eighteen Minor Works. The *Purananuru* and the *Padirryppattu* are of the utmost help in providing information on political and governmental matters. But the entire collection is extremely useful in giving hints regarding social and economic life of the people. These get confirmed not only by classical references, but by later inscriptions in Tamilnad.

As we have stated earlier, epigraphy becomes a more important source in the second half of the period under review. The earlier stages of Pallava history are revealed in patches by the copper-plate grants issued by those rulers mostly from outside the Tamil country. But with the coming to power of Simhavishnu (c.A.D. 600) the inscriptions become more usefully communicative and numerous. No doubt the inscriptions like literature tend to glorify contemporary rulers but incidental references become valuable. These have been useful particularly in drawing up dynastic lists; and recording the warlike and peace-time activities of Kings. Rajaraja I set the face for historical inscriptions containing *prasastis*. The entire middle ages from the eighth century A.D. to the sixteenth century A.D. can be called the age of inscriptions from the point of view of sources. Some of these inscriptions like the Veluikkudi grant of Medunjadayan and the Anbil plates of Sundara Chola confirm or introduce us to new information regarding the Sangam age. The inscriptions of the Chola and Pandyan imperial age, concerned with politico-military events of a period of imperial expansion at times get contradicted by similar epigraphs from neighbouring territories.

Apart from the epigraphs which provide material on domestic succession, there are a few which give information on social life like education, medical facilities, trade, etc. The Uttaramerur inscription of Parantaka I, the Manur inscription

which somewhat preceded it, the Kaverippakkam inscription of Nṛpatunga and the Tirumukkudal inscription of Virarajendra mention educational institutions, hospitals, etc. The Tiruvallangadu plates of Rajendra I, the other Chola epigraphic references to a college and hostel at Parvatisekharapuram, the Leyden grants of Rajaraja I, etc., are eminently useful to historians. The music inscriptions at Kudumiyamalai and Tirumayam usually attributed to Pallava Mahendravarman I indicate a definite stage in the evolution of musical tradition in the Tamil country.

The religious monuments from the seventh to the thirteenth century A.D. reveal a certain definite pattern of evolution in architectural style. Apart from giving the historian a continuous idea about the evolution of such a style, the variations in the style are also helpful in settling the age of the monuments. The sculpture and the painting are often a commentary on the social life of the people.

Literature in the post-Sangam period becomes largely devotional and Puranic from the *Perungadai* to the historian. But the commentary on the *Iraiyanar Ahapporru* which let in much information, some of which is incredible and controversial, elaborates the Sangam theme the *Pandikkovai*, the *Nandikkalambaham*, the *Periya Puranam*, the *Muvarula* and the *Kalingathupparami* are exceptions to the general rule of the irrelevance of literature to history in that period.

### III

Numismatics, a somewhat secondary branch of archaeology, is not very helpful in regard to the ancient period. Imperial Roman coins found in the Tamil country show the prevalence of maritime trade between the Roman Empire and Tamilnad. Numismatic evidence becomes more important in the Pallava, Imperial Chola and later Pandya periods. The metal, the size and the shape of the coins indicate the economic condition of the age. The Chola coins which portray a tiger seated under

a canopy in the centre flanked by the Pandyan fish and the Chera bow indicate Chola dominance over the southern neighbours.

Legends and myths have grown and mystified history. The legend of Agastya incapable of rational explanation in terms of documented data, the story of the Chola-Naga marital alliance, etc., are instances in point. But the myths cannot be dismissed as pure fiction for, after all, they are the memory of the society maintained in however garbled a form.

In the absence of any professedly historical work the historian of Tamilnad of the early period is obliged to fall back upon stray and unconnected pieces of information and make a credible fabric out of it.



# SANGAM PERIOD AND SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF TAMILNADU

MR. P. L. SAMY

(Secretary, Government of Pondicherry)

## I

THE BULK of the Sangam literary works cannot be dated later than third century A.D. on linguistic and historical grounds. The Gajavahu synchronism<sup>1</sup> pointed out by Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri can still hold good and the Chera King, Serum Senguttuvan, mentioned in the second song of *Pathirruppathu*,<sup>2</sup> an anthology on ancient Chera kings can be considered to have belonged to second century A.D. Divested of some legendary stories about the exploits of Chera kings, *Pathirruppathu*, a Sangam work, can still be relied upon as a source of ancient history of the Chera kings. Recent thinking on the dating of *Silappadikaram* on linguistic, stylistic and other grounds may throw doubts on the dating of the work and the genuineness of the royal birth of the author of the work. *Silappadikaram* seems to be an imaginary work of one of greatest poets in Tamil who used certain genuine historical and traditional materials available to him and pressed them into his otherwise legendary epic of the 'Story of the Anklet'. But the Gajavahu tradition mentioned for the first time and that also only in *Silappadikaram* among the Tamil works has to be accepted as a genuine source of history as Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri had held it. Though *Silappadikaram* may be post-Sangam and pre-Pallavan epic as there is no reference to Pallavas in this work, yet it can also be a later work as Professor Vaiyapuri Pillai<sup>3</sup> maintained on stylistic and linguistic grounds and also on the basis of advanced Saivite and Vaishnavite religious cults



and practices mentioned in the work. The commentary of *Silappadikaram*<sup>4</sup> which is later than eleventh century A.D. gives elaborate details of the flourishing trade in spices, cosmetics and other trade products but it seems to be more a portrayal of the trade that existed in the Chola empire of middle ages rather than that of Sangam period. It even mentions about a textile called 'Devagiri' which refers obviously to Deogir and hence the commentary cannot be earlier than even eighteenth century. The information found on the trade of precious stones and the account on the merits and defects of the stones in the commentary is corroborated by the inscriptions of the Cholas<sup>5</sup> who donated large number of precious and costly stones for temple jewels.

Professor M. G. S. Narayanan has in a recent paper<sup>6</sup> sought to establish the period of *Silappadikaram* as eleventh century A.D. on the basis of certain inscriptions found in Kerala. That some of Chera kings mentioned in early Sangam literature and *Silappadikaram* belonged to a period earlier than the third century A.D. is borne out by the findings and readings of the early Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions by Mr. I. Mahadevan.<sup>7</sup> However, the Chera king, Senguttuvan mentioned in *Silappadikaram* belonged to Sangam period before third century A.D., although the work itself may be a later one.

## II

Professor Nilakanta Sastri has used the material from the various accounts of foreign travellers and Western authors in his monumental work *Foreign Notices of South India*<sup>8</sup> to show how there was brisk trade in spices with South Indian ports. But not all the Sangam material has been fully explored and utilised in his work as he was mainly concentrating on the foreign notices of the South by Westerners. In the accounts of Pliny<sup>9</sup> a number of articles of trade are given but nowhere any mention of export of coconut is mentioned. In the entire bulk of early Sangam literature there are no references to

coconut. There is only one reference in *Puranamuru* poem but the Tamil name<sup>10</sup> of tender coconut found in this poem is considered to be derived from a Polynesian word. This fact shows that coconut was introduced a little earlier than the first century A.D. and Kerala shore could not have had the present topographical feature of coconut groves found everywhere during the Sangam period. Had it been so coconut products would have been one of the important export articles of trade from Kerala ports. Besides the titular tree of the Cheras is strangely enough not the coconut tree in ancient times but the palmyra. Sangam poems talk of the palmyra flower garland worn by the Chera kings.

Sangam landscape poetry follows more or less the concept of present ecosystem and the plant groups of the five natural regions described by the Sangam poets form one of the important integral elements of Sangam love poetry. As such one should expect the coconut palm as the main tree in the poetry describing the littoral and seashore region but the coconut is nowhere mentioned in any of the Sangam love poetry as an element of landscape poetry. Even very late love poetry belonging to twelfth or thirteenth centuries does not mention this tree, although the tree is well known from late Pallava inscriptions.<sup>11</sup>

Coconut growing and tapping of toddy from it had become an established profession confined to a particular caste in Pallava and later Chola periods. Hence, the derivation of the name of Kerala mentioned in Asokan inscriptions of third century B.C. from the name of coconut palm by Kerala historians is not only fanciful and is also an anachronism.

The Sangam poems form a valuable source material for arriving at the correct derivation of the name Kerala. Sangam poems call the ancient Kerala kings as Cheras. Cheran meant a man belonging to the seashore and Cherppan is the name used for the chief of the littoral tracts. Ker may be the earlier form of Cher and Asoka's inscription had preserved the earlier form of the word in the name of Kerala in which the second element meant the salt marshes.<sup>12</sup>

The information gleaned from the Western sources about

exports and imports of Tamilnadu in the early centuries of Christian era can be corroborated if we make a close study of the Sangam classics. Pliny says that several kinds of precious stones were exported from Kerala ports but except for diamonds, most of the precious stones were not got from India. Most of the other precious stones exported were imported into Tamilnadu from Ceylon and exported to the West. It is because the Cholas had control over Ceylon which produced most of the precious stones which were exported from the western ports of Chera kingdom in ancient times.

In Pathikam (preface) to the second poem of *Pathirruppathu* anthology, there is a mention about the capturing of Yavana's (Ionian) high priced jewels and diamonds and it is corroborated by the information given in *Akananuru* (127) which mentions about the tribute a Chera king forced from the Yavanas in the shape of precious jewels, golden statues and diamonds. Most historians have highlighted only the trade of pepper and spices with the West but there was also a brisk trade in precious stones in the early centuries of the Christian era. The stones exported from Tamilnadu were cat's eye, corundam and jasper. The cat's eye is called 'Vaidurya'. Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri has pointed out that Beryl was mined in Padiyur of Coimbatore district and exported to Rome. Pliny also speaks of Aquamarine mined from 'Punnad' which was in North Malabar. Professor Nilakanta Sastri has also pointed out how the Vaidurya exported from Funan in 225 A.D. could be only the stone imported from Tamilnadu. It could have been exported to Funan from Conjeevaram as the traditions itself is that Funan was established by a Koundinya Brahmin from South India.

There are conflicting views about the origin of the word Vaidurya. The name Vaidurya is traced from the Pali word *velhurya*.<sup>13</sup> T. Masters has derived it from *Velur*, a town in Tamilnadu. In old Akkadian the stone is called 'Burallu' in the eighth century B.C. It was called 'Beeryllos' in Greek and later became Beryl. The Greek name is supposed to have come from the Pali word. But the Pali word itself can be derived from the Tamil words 'Verul' and 'Veruku'. The wild cat's eye is compared to a gem stone in a Sangam poem.<sup>14</sup> The wild cat

is called 'Veruku' in Sangam Tamil and its peculiar and menacing eyes are referred to in many Sangam and later poems. Hence the Pali name *Velthurya* seems to be a derivation from the Sangam Tamil name of the wild cat, Veruku or from the Sangam Tamil word *Verul* from which the word *Veruku* is derived.

It is but natural to expect that the name of an exported precious stone of fame originating from Tamilnadu had its derivation from Tamil language. The Akkadian *Burallu* and the Tamil *Verul* and the Pali word *Velthurya* are so close in sound that one cannot miss the significance. Cat's eye was almost exclusively the monopoly of Kongunadu, a part of the Chera kingdom in ancient times.

There is another lesser precious stone which was also exported to the West in early centuries. It is 'Corundam'. The name has been derived from the Tamil name 'Kurundam' which signifies a tree in Sangam literature and a less precious stone in later literature. Corundam was used as an emery stone and its usage is clearly mentioned in Sangam poems.

Corundam stones were manufactured in North Kerala in the kingdom of Nannan who rose from the position of a chieftain under the Cheras to challenge the Chera suzerainty. The kingdom of Nannan became later the Mushika kingdom which is noticed in the Chalukya king Kirthivarman's inscription of the sixth century A.D. One of the export articles of trade during the late Pallava period is 'Kempai Karodam'. This is mentioned in Hastipur Kannada copper-plate inscription<sup>15</sup> of Pallava king Gopaladevan as one of the articles of commerce. The epigraphist or historian who read the Kannada inscription could not identify the trade name 'Kempai Karodam'. But one who has a knowledge of Sangam Tamil can identify the name 'Karodam' which is nothing else than the emery stones made out of Kurundam stone. There are two clear references to the manufacture of these abrasive stones in Sangam poems. One poem<sup>16</sup> refers to the manufacture of these stones in Nannan's kingdom which was around the present 'Ezhimalai' in north Malabar near Cannanore. *South Kanara Gazetteer* mentions about the occur-

rence of the Corundam stones in this tract and hence the information of Sangam times is corroborated. Besides another Sangam poem<sup>17</sup> mentions about the Palani hills being the source of these stones. It can safely be inferred that Corundam stone was an export article from the North Malabar of ancient Tamilnadu during the early centuries of the Christian era.

The word 'Kurundam' became 'Kuruvindam' due to Sanskritisation in medieval times. 'Corundam' in the early centuries was called by the Romans as 'Indian sand'. It was mentioned that the Romans got it as particles and hence they called it as 'sand'. Sangam poems refer to the manufacture of emery stone by the binding of the particles into stone which is said to be as strong as the lovers' bond.

There is another less precious stone mentioned in Sangam literature but no notice of its export had been taken. The stone is the black jasper or touchstone. Pliny<sup>18</sup> had said that the Black Jasper or touchstone came largely from India. Pliny's information is clearly corroborated by the many references in Sangam poems which call the stone by the name of 'Kattalai', the primary stone which determines the quality of gold. Hence, it is called 'Touchstone'. Pliny had written that the best pieces of Black Jasper or Touchstone occurring in collections came from India. What Pliny wrote is clearly reflected in the references to the stone in Sangam literature. There are seven references<sup>19</sup> to this stone in Sangam poems. There is beautiful simile in a Sangam poem of a black bee getting smeared with yellow pollen which is compared to the 'Touchstone' (Black Jasper) spotted with gold when it is used for testing the purity of gold.

Again, Pliny says about the quality crystal quartz the Romans got from Tamilnadu. There are seven references to the quartz of Tamilnadu in Sangam poems.<sup>20</sup> Hence, there is nothing strange when Pliny says that quartz was exported from western parts of Kerala which formed a part of Tamilnadu in ancient times. There is evidence to show that quartz globules were used as coin and currency in Sangam period just like gold globules.<sup>21</sup> But no one can deny that in even in



Sangam times Roman gold currency was popular in Tamilnadu if we take into account the large hoards of Roman hoards of gold coins in Coimbatore district and North Malabar district. The information furnished by the Roman historian, Pliny of the large extent of gold spent on the purchase of pearls and spices of Tamilnadu is, to a certain extent, corroborated by Sangam poems. One of the Sangam poems tells of a large hoard of gold hidden in a tank by Nannan and guarded by a standing army.<sup>22</sup> The hidden treasure of large hoard is compared to the fabulous treasure of gold hidden by the famous and victorious Nandas under the waters of the river Ganges. Another Sangam poem also mentions about the fabulous treasure of the Nandas.<sup>23</sup> The reference to Nannan's gold treasure seems to point to the large hoard of Roman gold currency due to a very favourable trade balance in the North Malabar kingdom of Nannan. Nannan who started as a chieftain in the Chera army later became a great king and could even challenge the Chera emperors. These early Sangam poems form valuable source of history. Unfortunately, very few historians have delved deep into the treasures of Sangam literature because of the lack of competent knowledge of this very ancient literature which is still intractable to historians.

Even very late traditions noticed by foreign travellers can be substantiated by genuine facts as in the case of Nannan. The kingdom of Nannan became the Mushika kingdom due to a misnomer as he ruled over a kingdom called 'Ezhil malai' which meant the hill full of 'Ezhil' tree called Saptaparni in Sanskrit. But later due to popular etymological change the Tamil name of the hill was turned into 'Mushika Parvatam', a ridiculous Sanskrit translation of the Tamil name of the hill. The Tamil name (Ehlampala in Malayalam) signified the hill full of trees of 'Ezhil', the tree with seven-segmented leaf. But due to popular etymology the word 'Ezhil' in Tamil became 'Eh' in Malayalam in the middle ages which means the hill of rats. Popular etymology can play havoc with names for we see Ellis choultry built by an Englishman, Ellis later became 'Eh choultry' meaning the choultry infected with rats.



The most surprising thing is that even in the sixth century A.D. the false etymological name of Eli hill country is referred in the inscriptions of the Chalukyas as the country of rats which is fallacious. Even the late medieval successors of Mushika kingdom were said to have ruled from 'Elikovilakam' in Malayalam which meant the palace of rats not flattering to the small dynasty. But unfortunately in India popular tradition plays a role much more important than what is warranted on the basis of the scientific and rationalistic criteria. The King Nannan was said to have ordered the execution of a small girl who inadvertently ate a mango fruit which fell from his royal garden.<sup>24</sup> He was cursed by an eminent poet for such cruelty and his descendants suffered on that score. This story has its echo in the incident narrated by Ibn Batuta although it is attributed to the King of Quilon. When the King of Quilon was riding a horse his son-in-law picked up a mango fruit from a well.<sup>25</sup> The King got very angry and ordered his execution on the spot by sword.

The narration of Ibn Batuta shows that the original Sangam story had been transferred from North Malabar king Nannan to South Malabar king by the thirteenth century. This is another instance of a foreign notice of a traveller having a genuine Sangam source.

*Mushika Vamsa*, a late Sanskrit work on the medieval kings of Mushikanadu mentions the name of kings like Nannan and Muvan. Muvan is mentioned in the inscription of Rajadhiraja 1047 A.D. as the name of the king of Ramakuda who was defeated along with the other Kerala kings and chieftains. Muvar in the inscription should be read as Muvan. Muvan is the name of a chieftain which occurs in *Purananuru* (209). He is called Muvan Sey meaning the son of Muvan. Nannan's son who ruled for Sangam near Tiruvannamalai was called Nannan Sey Nannan (Nannan, the son of Nannan) which seems to be a peculiar kinship usage in Sangam Tamil of North Malabar. The dynasty of Nannan might have survived by collateral line till the middle ages and the Sangam name of Nannan and Muvan were in usage till the middle ages in the Sanskrit *Mushika Vamsa* of eleventh century A.D.

## III

Sangam literature has references to certain warlike tribes with names like 'Sanror', 'Panan', 'Mazhavar' and 'Kadambar'. While the exact relationship of these warlike tribal communities with later dynasties cannot be easily determined their possible inter-relationship with later dynasties has to be explored. It is said in *Pathirruppathu*<sup>26</sup> that 'Sanror' tribe formed a part of the Chera army and the Chera king was their main protector. Later references during Pallava<sup>27</sup> times to this tribal caste refer to toddy tapping as their profession though even today the counterparts of these castes like Izavas, and Thiyyas in Kerala, the Halapaikas in Karnataka and Idigas in Andhra still have customs and traditions which lead one to conclude that these castes had their ancient origins as warriors. Sangam literature has not mentioned anything about the tapping of coconut for toddy and hence coconut tapping as a profession was introduced only in later Pallava times.

The Sangam tradition calling 'Sanror' (Sanar of the present times) as warriors still exist among these castes of similar origins in all the Southern states. *Pathirruppathu*<sup>28</sup> mentions Mazhavar as a warlike tribe in the Chera army. One of the Mazhavar tribal chieftains, Atikaman ruled from Tagadur (Dharmapuri) and his kingdom was annexed by the Cheras.<sup>29</sup> The Mazhavar was a fierce, marauding tribe who are said to be good cavalry men and who ate beef.<sup>30</sup> Even such tribes were assimilated in the Chera army and later their tribal chiefs became so respectable that they had marriage alliances with the Cholas. Mazhavarayan is a prominent general in the Chola army as evidenced by Rajendra Chola's inscription. That even beef-eating tribes could become respectable castes in later times when they took to military profession is not something strange. The warrior tribe like Sanror became low caste once they took to low profession like toddy tapping.

There are other tribal groups in Sangam period which seem to have become respectable by their alliance with Brahmins due to hypergamy. Panar is mentioned as one of the warlike tribes<sup>31</sup>

who lived in the north western borders of Tamilnadu during Sangam times (*Akanamuru* 155, 325). They are different from the 'Panan' who has the wandering minstrel frequenting the court of the kings. The commentators have distinguished these two tribes. The tract which Panar inhabited was later called Panarashtram and Perumbanappadi. The Vanakovarayar of the middle ages who had marriage alliances with the Cholas belong to this dynasty. The Satavahanas were called 'Ekabrahamanas' as their original ancestor in the male line was a Brahmin while their consorts were Naga women who followed Buddhism.<sup>32</sup> Certain historians have also held that the Pallavas were also a dynasty of mixed Brahmin and Naga origin. There is evidence that such dynasties arose in the early centuries of the Christian era in the Deccan on the borders of Tamilnadu.

The Koundinya dynasty of Funan kingdom in far off Cambodia was also another instance of the same phenomenon. The Kadamba dynasty was well established during the period of Mayurasaraman who is considered as belonging to the Brahmin caste. But it cannot be entirely ruled out that even the dynasty of the Kadambas was of mixed origin born out of the hypergamy of Haiga brahmin with Kadamba tribal. *Pathirruppathu*<sup>33</sup> talks of a town called the Great gateway of the Kadamba tribe (Kadambin Peruvayil) who lived near Nannan's kingdom of North Malabar. The name Kadamba kingdom was called Vanavasi kingdom later. Vanavasi actually meant the mother goddess who lives in the forest and she is now called Vanadurgha. This Vanavasi is mentioned in a Sangam poem as the patron deity of Nannan's North Malabar kingdom of Konkanam and she was then called as 'Kanammar Chelvi', the fertility goddess of the forest. Kanathur and Kanhangad (Kanamkadu) are some of the places still found in North Malabar area. These names are derivations of Konkanam and Kanam of Sangam period. It is said that by the grace of this goddess, Nannan got swift and auspicious white stockinged horses by ships which safely reached his shores.

The Kadambas were worshippers of Sapta Matrikas. Though the seven mothers are not mentioned in Sangam literature, the mother goddess Vanavasi is clearly mentioned. When Nannan

ruled over Konkanam there was no Kadamba dynasty but there was only a warlike tribe of Kadambas who ruled beyond the town of 'Kadambin Peruvayil' on the northern borders of Nannan's kingdom. They were not brahminised at that time. This fact clearly throws light on the age of 'Nannan' which must be before Mayurusarman and hence the age of Narmudi Cheral who defeated Nannan should be somewhere between second century A.D. and third century A.D.

#### IV

The tradition of Mother Goddess cult of 'Kanamarchelvi' of Sangam period and Vanavasi of the Kadambakula still exist in North Malabar transformed as Sakti and Bhagavati worship. There is a special type of Brahmachari priests who perform the worship of Mother goddess in the sacred shrines of this area. Apart from that, there is a separate and isolated caste of 'Pidaran' near Madayi hill who act as Pujaris of Sakti goddess in the same area. They have traditions that their caste people were imported from Tamilnadu. Pidari is a popular Tamil name for the malignant form of Mother goddess. Most of the villages in Tamilnadu have a Pidari Amman temple where the temple Pujari is a non-Brahmin. It is a well known fact that the cult of Mother goddess is a non-Aryan cult.

'Kanamarchelvi' was the non-Aryan Mother Goddess of Sangam period. The Kanamarchelvi was also worshipped by the Kadamba tribal group in Sangam times. Then this Mother goddess was transformed into Vanavasi goddess by the Kadamba dynasty of mixed origin. The Vanavasi kingdom of Mayurasarman and the Kadamba dynasty had its origin in ancient tribal admixture. *Pathirruppathu* had sung about the victory of Chera kings over the Kadambas and this victory could only be on the Kadamba tribe when they were not organised into an established dynasty. The Chera king is said to have destroyed the titular tree of the Kadamba tribe. The tree is even now considered by certain Maharastrian Brahmin and non-brahmin castes as their sacred and totemic tree. The present traditions

of North Malabar are surviving memories of the history of the area for which Sangam literature forms a reliable material source.

Traditions die hard and if intensive field work is done, we can rescue genuine historical and literary traditions which can furnish source material for history. An intelligent study of surviving contemporary symbols,<sup>34</sup> devices, stories and traditions can form valuable material for a proper appraisal of sources of ancient history and archaeology.

### REFERENCES

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- <sup>3</sup> Professor S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, *History of Tamil language and literature*, New Century Book House, Madras.
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- <sup>14</sup> *Akananuru* (Poem 73).



- <sup>15</sup> *Copper Plate Inscription of Pallavas* (Tamil), Tamil Historical Society.
- <sup>16</sup> *Akananuru* (Poem 356).
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* (Poem 1).
- <sup>18</sup> Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*.
- <sup>19</sup> *Akananuru* (178), *Linkurunuru* (215, 263), *Kurunthogai* (192), *Narrinai* (25, 3), *Peruppanarrupadai* (220).
- <sup>20</sup> *Akananuru* (5, 108, 399), *Narrinai* (292), *Pathirruppathu* (66 : 18), *Kurinjpattu* (57), *MalaiPadukadam* (516).
- <sup>21</sup> *Akananuru* (258).
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Kurunthokai* (132).
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* (292).
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- <sup>26</sup> *Pathirruppathu* (21 : 23-24, 55, 1-9).
- <sup>27</sup> *Copper Plate Inscriptions of Pallavas*, Tamil Historical Society.
- <sup>28</sup> *Pathirruppathu* (21 : 24, 55 : 8).
- <sup>29</sup> *Kurunthokai* (373).
- <sup>30</sup> *Akananuru*—Poem 1 refers to their fine cavalry. Poems 129, 249, and 309 refer to beef-eating habits of the tribe. Poem 337 refers to killing of a brahmin by the tribe. Mazhavar Perunaan (*Narrinai* 52, *Puram* 88) refer to the Chieftain of Mazhavar tribe. *Purunanuru* poems from 87 to 96 refer to Athikaman who became a king in his own right ruling from Tagadur which formed the Mazhapulam referred to in *Akananuru* 61.
- <sup>31</sup> Dr. Gopalachari, *Early History of the Andhra Country*.
- <sup>32</sup> *Pathirruppathu* (40, *Pathikam*).
- <sup>33</sup> *Pathirruppathu* (33, *Pathikam*). The *Mahabharata* mentions a people Nabha-Kanams along with the undoubted Southerners, the Karnataka and the Kuntalas—Bhisma Parva, no. IX. 59. The Kanam mentioned here is obviously the Konkanam and Kanam of Nannan of Sangam times.
- <sup>34</sup> Contemporary traditions have survived in Punjab of even such a hoary and very ancient civilisations like Mohenjodaro and Harappa civilisations. An example can be given. The trough to feed the cattle in Shandies in Punjab has four legs even today. Such a trough is depicted in Harappan seals and one cannot find such a trough in the South.



# ANCIENT TAMILS ON ALIENS AND THEIR LANDS

DR. N. JAGADEESAN

(Tagore Arts College, Pondicherry)

## I

THE ANCIENT Tamil works refer to foreign countries; their capital cities, rivers and mountains in alien lands and the foreigners with whom the Tamils had contact. Geographical works and travelogues like Ptolemy's *Geography*, Pliny's *Natural History* and the *Periplus* are not available in the ancient Tamil writings. As a result, the details regarding other countries lack geographical precision and are not exhaustive. Hence the required material has to be culled from incidental references occurring in the ancient Tamil literature. The Tamils of those times incorporated the names of foreign countries or peoples in their literature when describing the valour of the Tamil monarchs who overran or won over any foreign country. Foreigners or their places were also noted when mentioning the commercial activities they had with other countries. Certain non-Tamil goods were imported into their country which were called after the names of the foreign lands to which they belonged. The Tamils' knowledge of the epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, also induced them to mention the North Indian states or towns when describing the episodes of Rama or Krishna. Moreover, some foreigners are stated to have resided in the Tamil land and they have attracted literary notice.

The Sangam Tamils knew about the Dandakaranya and the Vindhyas, the Ganges and the Jumna, and the Himalayas. The Dandakaranya is mentioned as the Dandaranyam.<sup>1</sup> The old

commentary on the *Pathirruppathu* identifies the Dandaranyam as a "region in the Aryan land". The Chera king is said to have recovered the mountain goats that were carried away by the enemies in the Dandaranyam. This shows the then existing relations between the Cheras and the rulers in the Dandaranyam region.

The reference to the Vindhyas occurs in the *Manimekalai*.<sup>2</sup> It is mentioned that Kayasandigai was swallowed by Vindakadigai. Vindakadigai is said to govern the Vindhyas and to swallow angrily those who cross the Vindhyas.<sup>3</sup> This reminds us of the episode in the Valmiki *Ramayana*, Sundarakanda, where occurs the story of the shadow of Hanuman (who was proceeding to Lanka) being dragged by Sihnikai (a demoness) who had been endowed with such powers by Brahma. This probably shows that it was very difficult to cross the Vindhyas in those days.

The Ganges is said to descend from the high peaks of Imaiyan,<sup>4</sup> having many waterfalls; and the river is said to be large.<sup>5</sup> On the banks of this river, the Chera king Senguttuvan fought the northern kings Kanaka, Vijaya, etc., after crossing the river in ships.<sup>7</sup> The ruler of Tenrisai (literally, the southern direction) conquered the Ganges and the Himalayas which were in the North.<sup>8</sup>

About the Ganges, the *Ahananuru* gives an important historical detail.<sup>9</sup> It reveals that the wealth of the Nandas (who ruled before the establishment of the Mauryan kingdom in North India) was buried in the bed of the Ganges. Possibly the Nandas fearing the emergence of Chandragupta slowly to power with the help of Chanakya wanted to preserve their enormous wealth from falling into his hands and hid it somewhere in the bed of the Ganges. This reference indicates the riches of the North Indian kingdom which was known to the Tamils also.

It may be inferred that the ancient Tamils were keenly observing the developments in other countries. From the region of the Ganges the Tamils got the Gangai Vari (elephants, pearls, rubies, gold, etc.).<sup>10</sup> The Tolunai is the Jumna, another North Indian river. It is described as the Tolunai having fertile waters.<sup>11</sup> In the *Silappadikaram*, Krishna is spoken of as

Tolunaitturaivan.<sup>12</sup> Madari, the cowherdess, compared Kovalan (who stayed in her house) with Krishna, the ancestor of her clan. There too Krishna is associated with the river Tolunai. It is only natural that Krishna who made his exploits on the banks of the Tolunai was linked with it when the name of that river is mentioned.

## II

The Himalayas (Imaiyam) were well-known as the source of the Ganges and as a place where the Devas resided. There were rishis (ascetics) in the Himalayas. They were engaged in penance there and occasionally visited sacred places and tirthas in other parts.<sup>13</sup> The Chera king Cheral Adan and the Chola monarch Karikalan were the Tamil kings who inscribed their state emblems on those mountains. That is, their might spread so far North as the Himalayas. Further, Senguttuvan chose the Himalayan rocks as fit for making the idol to the Pattini Deivam—the Goddess of Chastity (Kannagi). The *Silappadikaram* narrates his march to the North, his victory over the North Indian rulers on the banks of the Ganges and his return with the rocks taken from the Himalayas which were cleansed in the Ganges and brought to his capital on the heads of the defeated northern kings.<sup>14</sup> In describing Siva's bow as Imaiya Vil there was confusion between the Meru and the Imaiyam. According to the Puranas<sup>15</sup> Siva had Meru as His bow. The *Kalittogai* and the *Paripadal*, however, mention the Imaiya Vil.<sup>16</sup>

The Tulunadu (South Canara area) is mentioned in the *Ahananuru*.<sup>17</sup> The Kosar hailed from the Tulunadu. They were brave warriors and are identified with the Satiyaputras. In the *Kurunlogai* their country Neytalanjeru is described as a fertile one having plenty of toddy.<sup>18</sup> But the *Ahananuru* says that the Kosar lived in Niyamam which had the noise of an ocean.<sup>19</sup> Their land is said to be Niyamam, to the east of Sellur. The Kosar entered Nannan's country and cut his tutelary tree.

They were noted for their cunning and diplomacy.<sup>20</sup> They were famous for keeping their word and friendship. They gave protection to Ahdai with their Vel Padai<sup>21</sup> (troops armed with spears). They defeated Palaiyan, the chieftain of Mohur.<sup>22</sup> In doing so they enlisted the support of the Moriyar (the Mauryas).<sup>23</sup> There are references to the Ilampalkarar.<sup>24</sup> They were viceroys of the Kosar. Some of them ruled over the Kongu country and were known as the Kongilam Kosar. Having heard that the Pandyan king Verriver Cheliyan killed a thousand goldsmiths to propitiate Kannagi, the Kongilam Kosar arranged festivities, etc., to pacify her which made the country fertile by proper rainfall.<sup>25</sup> In both Ilampal Kosar and Kongilam Kosar, the word 'Ilam' indicates their junior or subordinate status. Their speech is described as 'Nanmoli' (good speech)<sup>26</sup> and 'Onrumoli' (consistency in speech).<sup>27</sup> The Karunadars were the people of the Karunadu (later Karnataka). The name was perhaps derived from the colour of the soil which is black. Senguttuvan defeated the Karunadars. In the two places where their name occurs the epithet 'kodum' is prefixed.<sup>28</sup> 'Kodum' does not mean 'wicked' here, but 'corrupt in their Tamil speech'. Erumaiyur was the place ruled by Erumai, a chieftain, Erumai being the metonym for the ruler of that place.<sup>29</sup> Erumai, the Vadugar chief,<sup>30</sup> conquered and ruled the Kudanadu (the western country).<sup>31</sup> Erumiyuran, a Vel, was defeated at Talaiyalanganam by the Pandyan king Nedunjeliyan.<sup>32</sup> According to Nachchinarkkiniyar, the Eighteen Velir belonged to Tuvai (or Tuvarampati) which he confused with Dwaraka.<sup>33</sup> They followed Agattiyar (Agastya) and settled in the Tamil land. This Tuvai is really Dvarasamudra in Mysore.<sup>34</sup> It is mentioned that the high fort walls of Tuvai were made of copper.<sup>35</sup> But this seems to be unlikely; perhaps the walls were merely of brick.

The Vadugar lived in the Vadugar Teyam.<sup>36</sup> It lay north of the Tamil land and so they were also called the Vada Vadugar.<sup>37</sup> The name Vadugar is prefixed with the epithets like 'Vamba' (new or strange),<sup>38</sup> 'Vanrol' (of the mighty one),<sup>39</sup> and 'Muranmigu' (war-like).<sup>40</sup> The Vadugars neither knew nor

learned any other language except their own Ninmoli (outlandish speech) or Vanjinamoli (truth). They had ferocious dogs with them. A Vadugar chief by name Katti ruled over the Molipeyar Teyan<sup>41</sup> where Tamil was not spoken. Another country which found mention is the Kalinga.<sup>42</sup> Once its capital was Kapilapuram, or Kapilai, ruled by one Kumaran. He was a relative of Vasu, who ruled over Singapuram which was also in the Kalinga country.<sup>43</sup> Kapilai may refer to Kapilavastu, the native place of the Buddha.<sup>44</sup> Senguttuvan defeated the Kalinga people.<sup>45</sup> The word 'Kalinga' occurs in the name of a poet, Karuvur Kalingattar.<sup>46</sup> He perhaps belonged to Karuvur and so that was prefixed to his name. The Kalingattar must refer to the Kalinga country to which his ancestors once belonged and later settled in the Tamil land. In Tamil 'Kalingam' means a blanket (or cloth). The king of the Aviyar gave a kalingam to a peacock.<sup>47</sup> Blue kalingam<sup>48</sup> and a kalingam like the strong vapour<sup>49</sup> are mentioned. Probably the Tamils imported such blankets from the Kalinga country.

The Kannars were the friends of Senguttuvan. With their help he crossed the Ganges.<sup>50</sup> On the banks of the Ganges he defeated Kanaka and Vijaya who were helped by Uttaran, Vichittiran, Ruttiran, Bhairavan, Chittiran, Singan, Dhanuttiran, Sivetan, and all other northern kings. The Kannars (Nurruvar Kannar) were the Satavahanas who were friendly to Senguttuvan. It is said that the Kammars (smiths) of the Maratha country along with the other alien artisans were showing their skill and workmanship in the Tamil land.<sup>51</sup>

### III

The Ariyanadu is Aryavarttha. Senguttuvan defeated the kings of the Ariyanadu.<sup>52</sup> The people of that area were generally denoted as the Ariyar,<sup>53</sup> and to be exact the Vadavariyar.<sup>54</sup> The Ariyar were defeated<sup>55</sup> and after their defeat the Vil (bow emblem) was inscribed on the Vadavarai (Imaiyam).<sup>56</sup> The chief of the Ariyar was the Ariya Annal.<sup>57</sup> Kanaka and Vijaya



who were defeated by Senguttuvan are referred to as the Ariya Arasar. Senguttuvan imprisoned them and brought them to his country. They were released only after the consecration of the Kannagi temple.<sup>58</sup> The Ariya kings captured by Senguttuvan are also called the Vadavariya Mannar.<sup>59</sup> The Ariya Mannar thus imprisoned were a thousand in number.<sup>60</sup> They are said to have spoken low of the Tamils.<sup>61</sup> Only twenty among them were released to go to their land.<sup>62</sup> Yal Brahmadattan, an Ariya king, was a specialist on the Yal.<sup>63</sup> To edify an Ariya ruler (Brahmadatta) with the knowledge of Tamil literature Kapilar wrote the Kurinjippattu.<sup>64</sup> It is interesting to find that an Ariya wrestler is mentioned.<sup>65</sup> There were the Ariyappedis also in the Tamil land.<sup>66</sup> These pedis were probably hermaphrodites imported from the North. In those days two kinds of kuttu (dance) were in vogue in the Tamil land. One is Tamil kuttu (desi, local) and the other is Ariya kuttu (Margam, foreign) which was the product of the northern influence.<sup>67</sup> Northern India is also known as Vadapulam.<sup>68</sup> The king of the North Indian state was Vadapulattarasu<sup>69</sup> or Vadapula Mannar.<sup>70</sup> The northerners were also the Vadavar<sup>71</sup> like the Ariyar. Sanda-nakkal (red sandstone) was 'given to the South' by the Vadavar.<sup>72</sup> That is, it was brought to the South by the northerners.

Anganadu is the modern Bihar. Tuchchayan, husband of Subhamati in her previous birth, was the ruler of this kingdom.<sup>73</sup> His capital was Kachchayam.<sup>74</sup> Among those who were defeated by Senguttuvan the Bangalar were also included.<sup>75</sup> Their name resembles the Bengalese, but it may be noted that their country's name is not mentioned. There are references in the Silappadikaram and elsewhere to Vangam in the meaning of boat or ship. In this context the name of a poet, Alangudi Vanganar, may be examined. The prefix in his name denotes the place to which he belonged. He was called Vanganar probably because he belonged to a family of sea-farers or ship-builders.

The country called Magadha<sup>76</sup> is also mentioned as Uttara Magadha<sup>77</sup> (i.e., Magadha in the North). The ruler of the Magadha country who was hostile to the Chola monarch Karikalan submitted to him and made costly presents.<sup>78</sup> The artisans



from Magadha were living in the Tamil land.<sup>79</sup> The ancient Tamils were aware of the rule by the Nandas over Magadha with Pataliputra (Patna) as their capital. It was known to be prosperous and powerful. The Nandas buried their wealth in the banks of the Ganges.<sup>80</sup>

The Nandas were succeeded by Chandragupta Maurya who established the Mauryan Dynasty in the North. The Mauryas are mentioned as the Moriyar.<sup>81</sup> The epithet 'Vamba' is prefixed to the word Moriyar.<sup>82</sup> It is explained that the Moriyar were 'the Emperors of Chakravala and that they were the Vichchadarar and the Nagar'. But the name clearly indicates that they were the North Indian kings who ruled after the Nandas. With the help of the Moriyar the Kosar defeated Palaiyan, the chieftain of Mohur.<sup>83</sup>

The Vachchiranadu is another North Indian state.<sup>84</sup> It is said to be surrounded by the sea. Adiyarkkunallar reveals that it was on the banks of the Son. However, it is not Magadha as Magadha is also mentioned separately and distinctly. 'The King of the Vachchiranadu offered a Korrappandar—'canopy of victory' as a tribute to Senguttuvan.<sup>85</sup> The Madhyadesa is referred to as the Maddhimanadu<sup>86</sup> having the city Varanam (Varanasi or Kasi) in it. The town Ayodhya is spoken of as Ayotti. The city of Puhar which was left by Kovalan is likened to Ayotti without Rama.<sup>87</sup> The epic *Mahabharata* was fairly well known to the ancient Tamils. So it is natural that the Panchala ruler is mentioned in the Bharatam.<sup>88</sup>

#### IV

Along with other North Indian Kingdoms Avanti is also spoken of.<sup>89</sup> The capital of Avanti was also called Avanti,<sup>90</sup> which was a big town in the North. It is identified as Unjai (Ujjain) by Adiyarkkunallar. The king of Avanti offered a Toranavayil (ornamental gateway) as a tribute to the Chola monarch Karikalan.<sup>91</sup> The smiths of Avanti lived in the Tamil

land along with the artisans of the Magadha and Maratha countries as well as the Yavana carpenters and the Tamil artisans.<sup>92</sup> The Maluva (Malwa) was another northern kingdom. The Maluva Vendar (kings of Malwa) were among those who offered worship to Kannagi.<sup>93</sup> Kosambi, an ancient North Indian town, was founded by Kusamba. The ruler of Kosambi is mentioned as Vittavan.<sup>94</sup> The Gurjara country is denoted as Kuchcharam.<sup>95</sup> It is the modern Gujarat. This name also occurs in connection with the Kuchcharakkadigai, a Gujarat type of house.<sup>96</sup> In the Bharatam, Krishna is described as the king of Tuvarai (Dvaraka).<sup>97</sup> This Tuvarai is entirely different from the one mentioned earlier (i.e., Dvarasamudra in Mysore). When describing the incident of Krishna cutting the Kurundu tree, Tuvarai is again mentioned.<sup>98</sup> When Tuvarai is Dvarasamudra, it means a king of pulse<sup>99</sup> also.

## V

Lanka (Ceylon) is Ilangai and it is surrounded by the sea.<sup>100</sup> Its king who was contemporary of Senguttuvan was Kayavagu.<sup>101</sup> He is mentioned in the *Mahavamsa*. He is identified as Gajabahu I. He ruled that island in the latter half of the second century A.D. Another name of Ilangai is Ilam. It occurs in the names like Madurai Ilattu Budanrevan<sup>102</sup> and Ilattu Budanrevanar.<sup>103</sup> Edible commodities (Ilattunavu) were got from Ilam.<sup>104</sup> The word Yalppanar refers to the Panar (Bards) who went about playing the yal. They visited the royal courts and received rewards. It is interesting to note that Jaffna, a town in Ceylon goes by the name Yalppanam. Aputtiran is said to have died at Manipallavam, an island north of Ceylon. There was a Buddhapidikai which *Manimekalai*, the namesake of the heroine of the epic of the same name, visited. Perhaps that island is the same as Jaffna. The *Silappadikaram* speaks of a race of people having Kadambu as their sacred tree. They were pirates and hence called the Kadarkadambu. They were conquered by Senguttuvan. The Naganadu is said to be situated near Kilnilam<sup>105</sup> (i.e., in the East). The terminology Naga is applied to

the people of that place because they had the naga emblem. They were also called the Dakshakar. Sadhuvan escaped the storm by reaching the Naga country. Adhirai was informed that her husband Sadhuvan reached the dwelling place of the Nakkasaranar.<sup>106</sup> They lived in the Surmabai (terrifying mountains)<sup>107</sup> and were devoid of gentleness. Their name implies that they were nude ('nakkam' means naked and 'Saranar' means wanderers). They were probably nomads. They finally settled at Manakkavaram (the Nicobar Islands). They were savages, cannibals and naked.<sup>108</sup>

## VI

The Purva Teyam<sup>109</sup> is identified with the Eastern Gandhara (Khamboja). In a reference to the Purva Teyam it is stated : "Gandhara *alias* the big Purva Teyam".<sup>110</sup> The king of that country was Attipati whose son was killed by a snake Dittividam (which could kill by sight). Mention is made of commodities that came from Kalagam.<sup>111</sup> Kalagam or Kadaram is the modern Burma. Perhaps the Kadarangai (a kind of lemon) used for preparing pickles came from Burma into the Tamil land, just as perhaps Samba rice came from Champa. The Savakam is Java. Aputtiran in his previous birth was the king of Java and was known as Punyarasan.<sup>112</sup> Aputtiran was born in Savakam.<sup>113</sup>

## VII

It is curious to note that the Yavanar alone are mentioned by the ancient Tamils among those who came to the Tamil land from the West while from the East the names of the Nagar, the Burmese, the Savakar, the Nakkasaranar are given. The Yavanar are mentioned in the Sanskrit literature too. The word had its origin from Ionia, a Greek settlement in Asia Minor. Brisk trade was carried on between the Yavanar and the Tamils.

The Yavanar may either mean the Greeks or the Romans. The latter seems to be more probable because of the Roman coins

discovered in the South and contemporaneity of the Sangam Age and the Imperial Roman period. It is also possible that all those who came from the West were given the common name of Yavanar. The Yavanar came in ships which were of artistic beauty.<sup>114</sup> They brought the wine in fine glasses.<sup>115</sup> They made an idol famous for its workmanship.<sup>116</sup> It was the idol of Pavai with its stretched hands bearing an ahal (lamp) in which oil was poured to burn the wick.<sup>117</sup> The epithets 'vankan' (harsh look)<sup>118</sup> and 'vansol' (harsh speech)<sup>119</sup> are prefixed to the name Yavanar. The Yavanar were strong and they wore shirts.<sup>120</sup> Some Yavanars lived in the Tamil land as carpenters.<sup>121</sup> They were gatekeepers also.<sup>122</sup> Their dwelling area was known as Yavanarirukkai.<sup>123</sup> The aliens like the Greeks, Arabs, etc., known generally as the Milechchar, were described as 'Vamba Makkal' (strangers), who spoke different languages (eighteen in number).<sup>124</sup> Some of them were employed as palace guards. Such persons spoke the sign (gesture) language. Perhaps they did not know the local language. It is also possible that their tongues were cut off to prevent them from communicating the secrets of the royal household to others.

The ancient Tamils conceived of the land to which they belonged as but a fragment of a very large space. That large space was the imaginary and mythological land described as a 'very big island'.<sup>125</sup> It was named Navalam Tivu (Jambu Dvipa).<sup>126</sup> It was considered that the Tamil land formed only a portion of Bharata Kanda which was a part of Bharata Varsha. And Bharata Varsha was thought of as a unit of Navalam Tivu.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> *Pathirruppathu* : VI Ten Padiham 3.
- <sup>2</sup> *Manimekalai* : XX : 117-120.
- <sup>3</sup> Durgha resided in the Vindhya and hence was called Vindhya-vasini ; so the Devas would not cross the Vindhya.
- <sup>4</sup> *Perumbanarruppadai* : 429-431.
- <sup>5</sup> *Pathirruppathu* : V Ten Padiham 7.

- <sup>6</sup> *Manimekalai* : X : 56 ; *Silappadikaram* : VII : 2 : 2 ; XXV : 120, 160 ; XXVIII : 121 ; XXIX : 120, 160.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI : 84-90.
- <sup>8</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XI : 21-22.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ahananuru* : 265 : 5.
- <sup>10</sup> *Pattinappalai* : 190.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ahananuru* : 59 : 4-6.
- <sup>12</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XVII : *Aichchiyar kuravai*, Pattu 10. A Sri Vaishnava Acharya bore the name Yamunaitturaivar which was ultimately one of the names of Sri Krishna.
- <sup>13</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXVI : *Kadalolkadai* : 9.
- <sup>14</sup> Senguttuvan preferred the Himalayas to the Podigai perhaps on the ground that the distant mountains are more sacred which looks like the distant pastures being greener.
- <sup>15</sup> *Vide* Meru Mandara Puranam.
- <sup>16</sup> *Kalittegai* : 38 : 1 ; *Paripadal Tirattu* : I : 77. Siva's bow has been called 'Malai Vil' (the Mountain Bow) in *Purananuru* : 55.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ahananuru* : 15 : 3-5.
- <sup>18</sup> *Kuruntogai* : 113 : 1-7.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ahananuru* : 90 : 10-13.
- <sup>20</sup> *Kuruntogai* : 73 : 4.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ahananuru* : 113 : 1-7.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 251 : 6-8 ; *Purananuru* : 283 : 6 ; *Maduraikkanchi* : 507-510.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ahananuru* : 251 : 6-18.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 216 : 11 ; *Purananuru* : 169 : 9 ; *Maduraikkanchi* : 773 ; *Silappadikaram* : *Uraiperukatturai* : 2.
- <sup>25</sup> *Silappadikaram* : *Uraiperukatturai* : 2.
- <sup>26</sup> *Kuruntogai* : 15 : 2-3.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ahananuru* : 196 : 10.
- <sup>28</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXV : 156 ; XXVI : 106.
- <sup>29</sup> The name was derived from the buffalo totem of the tribe or from buffalo the animal according to the ancient Tamil tradition. The Erumaiyur was later Sanskritised as Magisha Ur and corrupted into Mysore.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ahananuru* : 36 : 17.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 115 : 5.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 36 : 17.
- <sup>33</sup> Nachchinarkkiniyar's Commentary on *Tolkappiyam* Payiram and Ahat, 32.
- <sup>34</sup> 'Poysalas' : Dr. N. Subrahmanian, *Journal of Indian History*.
- <sup>35</sup> *Purananuru* : 201 : 10.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ahananuru* : 213 : 8.
- <sup>37</sup> *Purananuru* : 378 : 2.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ahananuru* : 375 : 14.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 253 : 18.

- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 281 : 8.
- <sup>41</sup> *Kuruntogai* : II : 5-6.
- <sup>42</sup> *Manimekalai* : XXVI : 15-16 ; *Silappadikaram* : XXIII : 138.
- <sup>43</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXIII : 138-142.
- <sup>44</sup> *Manimekalai* : XXVIII : 143.
- <sup>45</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXV : 156.
- <sup>46</sup> Author of the verse 183 in the *Ahananuru*.
- <sup>47</sup> *Sirupanarruppadai* : 85.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-97.
- <sup>49</sup> *Perumbanarruppadai* : 469.
- <sup>50</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXVI : 176-185.
- <sup>51</sup> *Manimekalai* : XIX : 107.
- <sup>52</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXIX : Uraippattumadai.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ahananuru* : 276 : 9 ; 336 : 21-22 ; 398 : 18 ; *Padirruppattu* : II : 23.
- <sup>54</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXV : 158.
- <sup>55</sup> *Pathirruppathu* : II Padiham 7 ; *Ahananuru* : 396 : 16.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ahananuru* : 396 : 15-18 ; 398 : 18.
- <sup>57</sup> *Pathirruppathu* : V Ten Padiham 6.
- <sup>58</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXVIII : 194-195.
- <sup>59</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXIX : Uraippattumadai.
- <sup>60</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXV : 160-163.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII : 153.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII : 177.
- <sup>63</sup> *Kuruntogai* : 184.
- <sup>64</sup> *Kurinjippattu* : Colophon.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ahananuru* : 386 : 5. The wrestler Ariyapporunan while engaged in a wrestling match with Panan, his legs were torn apart and he died.
- <sup>66</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXVII : 186-187.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, Arangerrukkadai : 12 and its commentary.
- <sup>68</sup> 'Vadapulam' also means an imaginary land called 'Uttaraguru' (Bhogabhumi). It is the place of eternal bliss. Those who live there are the Vadapulam Valnar—*Pathirruppathu* : 68 : 13.
- <sup>69</sup> *Purananuru* : 31 : 17.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 52 : 5.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ahananuru* s 340 : 16 ; *Pathirruppathu* ; V Ten Padiham I : *Pattinappalai* : 275-6.
- <sup>72</sup> *Nedunalvadai* : 51.
- <sup>73</sup> *Manimekalai* : X : 52.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, X : 53.
- <sup>75</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXV : 156-163.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, V : 101-102 ; XXVI : 42 ; XXVIII : 86-88.
- <sup>77</sup> *Manimekalai* : XXI : 175.
- <sup>78</sup> *Silappadikaram* : V : XXVIII : 86. The king of Magadha pre-



sented a Patti Mandapam (Courtyard or Debating Hall) to Kari-  
kalam : *Manimekalai* : I : 61 ; and, *Silappadikaram* : V : 102.

- <sup>79</sup> *Manimekalai* : XIX : 107-108.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ahananuru* : 265 : 4-6.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 69 : 10-12 ; 281 : 8.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ahananuru* : 251 : II-14.
- <sup>83</sup> *Purananuru* : 175 : 6.
- <sup>84</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXVIII : 86.
- <sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, V : 90.
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, XV : 178-179.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII : 65-66.
- <sup>88</sup> *Marankelu* : 12.
- <sup>89</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXVIII : 86.
- <sup>90</sup> *Manimekalai* : IX : 28-30.
- <sup>91</sup> *Silappadikaram* : V : 103-104.
- <sup>92</sup> *Manimekalai* : XIX : 107-110.
- <sup>93</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXX : 157-160.
- <sup>94</sup> *Manimekalai* : XV : 61-63.
- <sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII : 145, 152.
- <sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>97</sup> *Marankelu* : 1-5.
- <sup>98</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XVII : *Ulvaiyalitu* : 3.
- <sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII : 73.
- <sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX : 160 ; Lanka had been called Ilangadivam : *Manimekalai* : XXVIII : 107.
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX : 160 ; Uraiperukatturai para 3.
- <sup>102</sup> Author of the verses 189, 343, and 360 of the *Kuruntogai*.
- <sup>103</sup> Author of the verses 88, 231, and 307 of the *Ahananuru*.
- <sup>104</sup> *Pattinappalai* : 191.
- <sup>105</sup> *Manimekalai* : VIII : 54-55.
- <sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI : 14-16 ; 36-40.
- <sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI : 55-56.
- <sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI : 15, 39, 56.
- <sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, IX : 13.
- <sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>111</sup> *Pattinappalai* : 191.
- <sup>112</sup> *Manimekalai* : XXI : 89 ; XXVIII : 75-76.
- <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, XV : 37.
- <sup>114</sup> *Ahananuru* : 149 ; 9-10.
- <sup>115</sup> *Purananuru* : 56 : 18.
- <sup>116</sup> *Nedunalvadaï* : 101-102.
- <sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* *Perumbanarruppadai* : 316-317.
- <sup>118</sup> *Mullaippattu* : 61.
- <sup>119</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XXVIII : 141 ; XXIX : *Usalvari* 3 ;  
*Pathirruppathu* : II : Padiham 8.

- <sup>120</sup> *Mullaippattu* : 59-61.  
<sup>121</sup> *Manimekalai* : XIX : 108-109.  
<sup>122</sup> *Silappadikaram* : XIV : 67-68.  
<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, V : 10.  
<sup>124</sup> *Manimekalai* : XXVIII : 221.  
<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, II : I ; VI : 195.  
<sup>126</sup> *Eladi* : 56 ; 4 ; *Manimekalai* : XI : 107 ; XXV : 12 ; XXVIII : 180.

# A REVIEW OF THE SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF THE CHOLAS OF THE VIJAYALAYA LINE (850-1070 A.D.)

DR. (MRS.) V. BALAMBAL  
(*University of Madras*)

## I

THE CHOLAS played a dominant role in the history of South India. They ruled over the Kaveri region during the Sangam age and later confined themselves to Uraiyur during the reign of the Kalabhras. Even after the fall of the Kalabhras, they did not rise to power like the Pallavas and the Pandyas. It was Vijayalaya who re-established the Chola power in Tanjore by about 846 A.D.

## II

### SOURCES

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri in his monumental work *The Cholas* had dealt in detail all the source materials available for the study of the Cholas.

Inscriptions, copper-plates, literature, both indigenous and foreign, numismatics and monuments are the chief source material for the study of the history of the Cholas. The inscriptions engraved on stray pieces and temple walls relate to a number of engagements of the Cholas. They are very useful for the study of the political, social, economic, religious and cultural conditions prevalent during the time of the Cholas.

The records say that the Cholas belonged to the Solar race

and their emblem was tiger. They sometimes give a genealogical and chronological survey of the Chola rulers.

The Anbil copper-plates of Sundarachola, the Madras Museum copper-plates of Uttamachola, the Larger Leiden copper-plates of Rajaraja I, the Tiruvalangadu and Karandai copper-plates of Rajendra I, and the Charala copper-plates of Virarajendra give valuable information about the Cholas. The Kalingattuparani of Jayankondar, the Muvarula and Kulottungan pillai tamil of Ottakuttar narrate many incidents that had happened during the reign of the Cholas. *Guruparambarai*, *Nalayiradivya Prabandam*, *Periapuranam*, are some of the religious works which make some reference to the Cholas. *Viracholium*, *Yapperungalakarikai*, etc., are some of the secular works mentioning some Chola rulers. The Chinese annals state the contact between the Cholas and the Chinese. *Kongudesarajakkal*, *Brahadisvaramahatmiyam*, *Nava-cholacharitam* and *Cholavamsa Charitram* are the chronicles referring to the Cholas. *Mahavamsa*, the Ceylonese Buddhist chronicle in Pali, gives a detailed account of Chola-Ceylonese relationship even from the Sangam age.

The coins of the Cholas are available in large number. They contribute to the social and economic history of the Cholas. A study of their shape, size and weight is quite interesting.

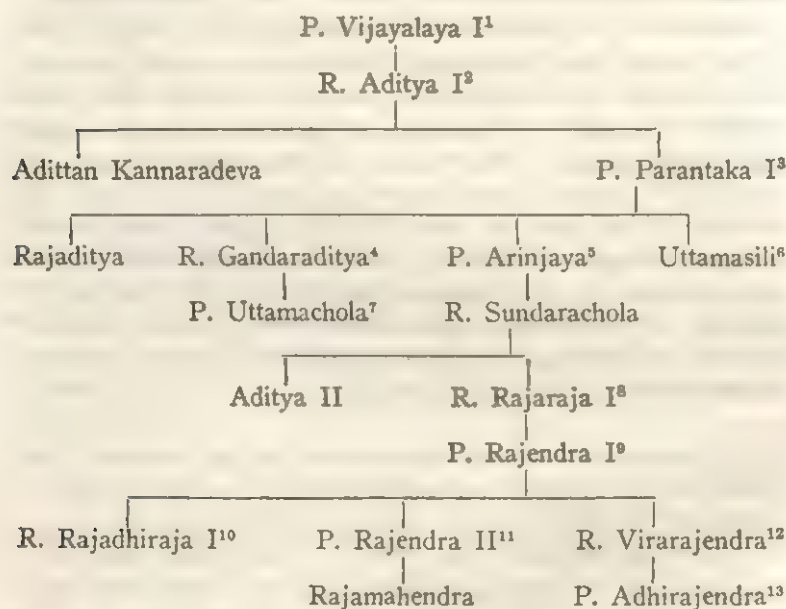
The Cholas were great builders. They built temples of various sizes. Art and architecture of the Cholas constitute a very interesting and illuminative chapter in the history of the Cholas. The temples were centres of activities and they acted as modern archives.

Thus a general view is given of the source material available for a proper study of the Cholas. A general survey of the rulers of Vijayalaya line follows and then some important aspects of the reign of the Cholas are given with the help of the above mentioned sources.

## III

## POLITICAL HISTORY

Before going further, a genealogical table of the Cholas would ease the study of the Cholas. They followed the practice of assuming the titles Panakesari and Rajakesari alternately.<sup>1</sup>



In the first half of the ninth century A.D., the Cholas ruled as the feudatories of the Pallavas confining themselves to Uraiyur region. The Muttaraiyars, a powerful feudatory dynasty, were prominent in Tanjore. Vijayalaya defeated the Muttaraiyars and captured Tanjore and re-established Chola power there. The Kanyakumari inscription of Virarajendra states that Vijayalaya established the city of Tanjore,<sup>2</sup> whereas the Tiruvanlangadu copper-plates of Rajendra I state that Vijayalaya captured Tanjore and made it his capital.<sup>3</sup> The Sendalai inscription of Suvaranmaran<sup>4</sup> the Muttaraiya chief clearly states that Tanjore and Vallam were under his control. Hence it could be very well said

that Vijayalaya captured Tanjore from the Muttaraiyars and made it his capital.

The victory of Vijayalaya over the Muttaraiyars and the capture of Tanjore from them are also known from an inscription from Viracholapuram in Tirukkoyilur taluk of the South Arcot district.<sup>5</sup> Vijayalaya assumed the title Tanjaikonda Parakesari, Parakesari the captor of Tanjore. Aditya I, a feudatory of the Pallavas, assisted Aparajita Pallava against Nrpatunga Pallava at Sripurambiyam in 885 A.D. and won victory for which he was well awarded with a major share of the conquest. Pandya Varaguna II who helped Nrpatunga is said to have died after the battle. But this statement was nullified by the Dalavaipuram copper-plates of Parantaka Viranarayana (successor of Varaguna) which state that Varaguna was leading a life of a Siva devotee and he was the nominal king when the copper-plate grant was made by Parantaka Viranarayana.<sup>6</sup>

The conquests by Aditya I (871-907 A.D.) of the Kongu country and Tondaimandalam and his matrimonial alliance with the Rashtrakutas are also known from various stone records. Aditya I's friendly contact with the Chera ruler Sthanu Ravi is known from a Tillaisthanam inscription.<sup>6</sup>

Parantaka I (907-955 A.D.) was the son and successor of Aditya I. He assumed the title 'Maduraikonda' in his third regnal year itself.<sup>7</sup> In his fifteenth regnal year he called himself as 'Maduraiyum Ilamumkonda Parakesari'.<sup>8</sup> The Ceylonese expedition of Parantaka I to get the royal insignia of the Pandyas is known to us from many stone records.

Ganga Prithivipati II's allegiance to Parantaka I is seen from the Sholinghur inscription of Parantaka I.<sup>9</sup> When Parantaka I fought the battle of Vallala with the Banas and Vaidumbas, he was assisted by Prithivipati II and as Parantaka I was pleased with his Ganga feudatory, he conferred the title 'Sembiyanmavali Banaraya' and the Bana country on him.<sup>10</sup>

This shows the high status enjoyed by Prithivipati II. A Tiruvorriyour record mentions Parantaka's expedition to Sitpuli Nadu and destruction of Nellore by the Chola forces.<sup>11</sup> Simi-



larly, his defeat at the hands of Rashtrakuta Krishna III at Takkolam in 949 A.D.,<sup>12</sup> death of his son Rajaditya inflicted by Ganga Butuga II<sup>13</sup> and loss of Tondaimandalam are also gleaned from the records of the Cholas as well as that of the Rashtrakutas and Gangas.

The Cholas had to face a set-back after the battle of Takkolam. Parantaka I was succeeded by his son Gandaraditya who showed keen interest in religious activities. He is known as 'Meikkelandarulina Deva', the king who went to the West.<sup>14</sup> His wife Sembiyan Mahadevi built many temples and endowed lands for religious activities.

Arinjaya, the brother and successor of Gandaraditya had a short reign. He married a Vaidumba Princess<sup>15</sup> and a Velir Princess Pudi Adiccapidari.<sup>16</sup> As he died at Arrur, he was known as 'Arrur Tunjina Deva'.<sup>17</sup>

A new leaf was turned in the Chola history by Sundarachola, son of Arinjaya. He reconquered Tondaimandalam. He defeated Virapandya and assumed the title Pandyanaichchuram Irakkinadeva (who drove the Pandya to the forest) in his seventh regnal year (964 A.D.) This Virapandya has been wrongly identified as a son of Rajasimha Pandya II.<sup>18</sup> Aditya Karikala II, son and crown prince of Sundarachola is said to have assisted his father in defeating Virapandya and in a subsequent battle taken the head of Virapandya in his second regnal year.<sup>19</sup> As Virapandya is said to have ruled for twenty years,<sup>20</sup> Virapandya killed by Aditya II could be identified with the one defeated by Sundarachola in a previous instance. Though the exact relationship between Rajasimha II and Virapandya is not known, it is clear from inscriptions and copper-plates that Virapandya ruled for twenty years and though he assumed the title 'Cholan talaikonda', he had to face defeat and death at the hands of the Chola Prince Aditya II. The Larger Leiden copper-plates of Rajaraja I speak of the valour of Aditya II over Virapandya.<sup>21</sup> Aditya II's close ally Parthivendravarman, who belonged to the Pallavakula, assisted his Chola overlord in killing the Pandya ruler and he also assumed the title 'Vira Pandyan talai konda'.<sup>22</sup>

Parthivendravarman has been wrongly identified with Prithivipati II<sup>23</sup> and with Aditya II Karikala.<sup>24</sup> The first identification can be ruled out as Prithivipati II was a feudatory of Aditya I and Parantaka I whereas Parthivendravarman belonged to the reign of Sundarachola and Uttamachola. The second identification is based on the royal titles borne by Parthivendravarman. It was a practice of the feudatory to bear the royal titles of his overlord. Hence there was nothing strange on the part of Parthivendravarman bearing the titles of Aditya II. Parthivendravarman also bore the title 'Virapandyantalaikonda' in his second regnal year. Aditya II's records are available only up to his fifth regnal year whereas those of Parthivendravarman are found up to his fifteenth regnal year.<sup>25</sup> Hence K. A. Nilakanta Sastri writes, "It would upset the scheme of chronology, which is based on the identification of Aditya II with Parthivendra, for we cannot possibly find room for the fifteen years before the accession of Uttamachola within the reign of Sundarachola".<sup>26</sup> Hence it could be concluded that Parthivendravarman started his career as a loyal feudatory of Aditya II and even after the death of his overlord, enjoyed high status and was given the privilege as assuming high sounding titles and issuing his own records.

Sundarachola was known as 'Ponmaligai Tunjinadevar',<sup>27</sup> meaning that he died at the golden palace at Kanchipuram. He is said to have led a retired life after the murder of his son Aditya II. He was succeeded by Gandaraditya's son Uttamachola in 970 A.D. Regarding Uttamachola's accession also there was controversy. Some scholars suspect Uttamachola as the murderer of Aditya II. This cannot be accepted as the sixteen year reign of Uttamachola was a quiet and calm one and under his mother Sembiyan Mahadevi's supervision, many new temples were built, old ones were repaired and brick temples were rebuilt of stone. Many endowments were made by this ruler and other members of the royal household too. Though there was no evidence to show any extension of territory to the Chola empire, the reign of Uttamachola witnessed peace. Later also, though he had a son Madurantakan Gandaraditya, he chose Arulmolivarman the future Rajaraja I, as his successor. In 985 A.D., Raja-

raja I succeeded Uttamachola.

The period of Uttamachola saw the fall of Rashtrakutas and the rise of Western Chalukyas of Kalyani. The enmity between the Western Chalukyas and the Cholas continued till last. Rajaraja I's period was a glorious one in the history of India. It witnessed not only the extension of territory but also remarkable changes in the economic, social, religious and cultural spheres. He started the practice of recording his achievements chronologically in his inscriptions and copper-plates. This was followed by his successors too. The Cheras, the Pandyas and the Western Chalukyas were defeated. The Gangas, the Nolambas, the Banas, the Velirs and the Paluvettaraiyars accepted his overlordship. The northern part of Ceylon was annexed. Vengi was restored to its lawful ruler by Rajaraja I. Following his footsteps, his son Rajendra I (1012-44 A.D.) also undertook many campaigns in the north, south, far east and south east Asian countries and in almost all his endeavours he was successful. In the early part of his reign whole of Ceylon was captured. Pandya country was under his son who with the title Jatavarman Sundarachola Pandya ruled for more than twenty-three years.<sup>28</sup>

Rajadhiraja I (1018-1054) was a great conqueror. He assisted his father Rajendra I in his conquests when he was the crown prince and one of the important events of his time was the bringing of the Dwarapalaka statue from the Western Chalukya territory.<sup>29</sup> The Kanyakumari inscription, Kalingattuparani (VIII V26) and Vikramacholanula<sup>30</sup> also attest his victory over the Western Chalukyas. He was successful in defeating the Cheras, Pandyas and the Ceylonese. Rajadhiraja I died in 1054 A.D. at Koppam while fighting with Somesvara I.<sup>31</sup> Rajendra II, his younger brother, continued the attack and won great victory at Koppam and became the Chola monarch.<sup>32</sup> The Western Chalukya records are silent about these incidents. Rajendra II gave his daughter Madurantaki to the Eastern Chalukya prince Rajendra, the future Kulottunga I.<sup>33</sup>

Rajamahendra, the crown prince, predeceased Rajendra II, and so the latter was succeeded by his younger brother Vira-

rajendra. The reign of Virarajendra was full of wars. He fought relentless battles with Somesvara I. He defeated him finally at Kudalsangammam and when Somesvara did not keep up his word in meeting the Chola on the same battle-field for the second time, Virarajendra put the Western Chalukya Generals to flight.<sup>34</sup> He had friendly contact with Vikramaditya (VI) and gave his daughter in marriage to him.<sup>35</sup> His son and successor Adhirajendra was a weak ruler. There broke a rebellion in the Chola country after the death of Virarajendra. With great difficulty Adhirajendra became the ruler but soon he was killed and Chola throne was occupied by the Chalukya prince Kulottunga I in 1070 A.D.

Regarding the administration of the Cholas detailed studies have been made by scholars. Here an attempt is made to bring out some of the salient features in the socio-economic, religious and cultural spheres.

## IV

### WOMEN

Women enjoyed high status during the Chola rule but still they were second to men only. Royal women like Sembianmahadevi and Kundavai were greatly respected.

Sembian Mahadevi built many temples and she saw to that that while renovating the temples, the older inscriptions were copied and after reconstruction they were once again re-engraved on the new temple walls. She donated very liberally to many temples.

Kundavai, the elder sister of Rajaraja I, built Siva temple, Vishnu temple and gave gifts to them as well as to Jain *pallis* and Buddha *Viharas* and *Aturasalais*.<sup>36</sup> The gifts of Kundavai to the Brahadisvara temple were recorded next to that of Rajaraja I's own, on the walls of the central shrine and the officers of state found a place only on the niches and pillars of the enclosure.<sup>37</sup>

## V

## COURTESANS

They were known as *devaradiyars*, the servants of Gods. They also made considerable benefactions to temples which were suitably recognised by privileges of a hereditary nature being conferred on them in relation to the services and festivals in the temples concerned. For the Brahadisvara temple at Tanjore, Rajaraja appointed four hundred *Devaradiyars* and gave them each a house and one *Veli* of land. A Tiruvorriyur inscription dated 1049 A.D. states that a *Devaradiyar* Chatural Chaturi by name is known as a wife (*Ahamudaiyal*) of a certain Nagan Perunagdan.<sup>38</sup>

## VI

## SLAVERY

Slavery in the real sense of the word was not common in the time of the Cholas. Women and men sold themselves to temples or *mutts* and sometimes they were donated by rich men to some institutions. Two ladies sold themselves and their dependants and relatives to a temple in Tanjore district.<sup>39</sup> During the reign of Parantaka I (948 A.D.) a *Madhyastha* of the village of Nandivarman Mangalam presented to the temple of Vayalur (Tiruchi district) three women to sing Tirupadigam and serve as *kavarip-pina* (*Chauri bearers*) to God Paramesvara.<sup>40</sup> In 1002 A.D., twelve families of fishermen were dedicated to the temple of Varahadeva at the instance of two officials serving in the locality. The Sabha of Tiruvadandai undertook to hold them and their descendants strictly to their obligations.<sup>41</sup>



## VII

## SATI

Sati was prevalent only in the royal household. There were two instances of sati being performed by two queens. One was Vanavanmadevi, queen of Sundarachola<sup>42</sup> and the other was Veeramadevi, a queen of Rajendra I.<sup>43</sup>

## VIII

## RELIGION

Though the Cholas were staunch Saivites, they were very tolerant towards other religionists. Vijayalaya built a temple for Nisumbasudani in Tanjore after establishing his power there.<sup>44</sup> Aditya I built stone temples for Siva on the two banks of the Kaveri.<sup>45</sup> Leiden grant says that Parantaka I covered with gold the Siva temple of Chidambaram. Gandaraditya dedicated his life for saivism and he sang Tirupadigam on Chidambaram Nataraja. The contribution of Sembiyanmadevi to religion has been already dealt with. Sundarachola was tolerant towards Buddhists and Jains. During his time and Uttamachola's reign many temples were built and lands were donated freely.

Rajaraja I was not only a great warrior, he was also a great builder. He built the Tanjore big temple and made enormous donations. Even from far-reaching places like Ceylon, lands were endowed to the Tanjore temple. Siva temples were built even in Ceylon by his officials.<sup>46</sup> He gave Anaimangalam village to the Chudamani Buddhist Vihara which was built at the request of the Kadaram ruler Sri Mara Vijayottungavarman.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Rajendra I also built temples and contributed liberally to them. Among them, the one that deserves special mention was the Siva temple at Gangaikondacholapuram. He wanted to build a temple like Brahadisvara temple. After his northern conquest, he founded the new city Gangaikondacholapuram, and built there a beautiful structural temple. Sarvasiva Pandita was his Guru and



he gave him every year 2,000 kalam paddy.<sup>48</sup> Following the footsteps of their predecessors, we see that Rajadhiraja I, Rajendra II and Virarajendra worshipped Siva and donated lands for building of temples and their maintenance. Rajamahendra, the co-regent of Rajendra II is said to have contributed a serpent conch studded with precious stones for Srirangam Ranganatha.<sup>49</sup>

## IX

### PALLIPADAI VEEDU

The Chola rulers followed a strange practice of building temples over the remains of their predecessors. For example, Parantaka I built at Tondaimanadu a temple over the remains of Aditya I and named it as Kodandaramesvara or Adityesvara.<sup>50</sup> Rajaraja I built a temple at Melpadi and named it as Arinjigai Isvaram after his grandfather Arinjaya.<sup>51</sup> At Tirumukkudal, he built a *Mandapa* and called it after Sembiyanmadevi.

## X

### MERCHANTS GUILDS

At Kodumbalur a merchant guild known as *Manigramam* was functioning and it endowed a charitable trust in Salem.<sup>52</sup> The guild at Tirupuranbiyam was known as *Valanjiyar*.<sup>53</sup> Nanadesa Tisaiyayirattu Aninurruvar was an important guild. Whether it meant the five hundred of the thousand direction in all countries or the one thousand and five hundred from all countries and direction is not certain. Members of this corporation obtained some houses assigned to them about 1015 A.D. by the sabha of Nigarili-Chola-Chaturvedimangalam for being used as residences or warehouses.<sup>54</sup> In 1033 A.D. a piece of land was donated for the service in a Siva temple at Ambasamudram for the benefit of the above mentioned guild.<sup>55</sup>

In big trade centres like Kanchipuram and Mamallapuram, there existed local organisations of merchants like Nagaram.<sup>56</sup> That Nagarattar played a dominant role in managing the local affairs is known from many inscriptions.<sup>57</sup>

## XI

### CONFISCATION OF PROPERTY

The Udayarkudi inscription of Rajaraja I<sup>58</sup> refers to the confiscation of the properties of Kramavithan, Ravidasan and others as they were proved to have had a hand in the murder of Aditya II, the elder brother of Rajaraja I. A royal order was issued by the king and after the confiscation, the lands were sold.

## XII

### NATURE OF DONATION

Villages donated to Brahmins were known as Brahmadeyas. Chaturvedi mangalams were the villages given as gift to the Brahmins well versed in four Vedas. Lands were donated for the maintenance of Vedapadasala.<sup>59</sup> Lands were gifted to Bhatta who taught Vedantas to his students. The Bhatta in turn gave free boarding and lodging to his students.<sup>60</sup> The Tirumukkudal inscription of Virarajendra dated 1067 A.D. states about the entire budget of receipts and expenses in the local Vishnu temple and the schedule of expenses included provisions for a college and a hospital.<sup>61</sup> Lands endowed to the temples were known as devadana. Lands exempted from tax were known as *Iraiylili* (tax free) lands. *Pallichandam* was the donations made to the *Jainpallis*.

## XIII

## RELATION WITH FEUDATORIES

The Chola rulers were benevolent despots and they maintained very cordial relations with their feudatories. The Gangas, the Banas, the Vaidumbas, the Velirs of Kodumbalur, the Malavarayars and the Paluvettaraiyars showed allegiance to their Chola overlords. Ganga Prithivipati II was a faithful feudatory of Aditya I and his son Parantaka I. Tennavan Ilangoavelar alias Bhutivikramakesari was loyal to Aditya I and Parantaka I and he built the Muvarkoil temple. He named his two sons Parantaka and Adityavarman after his two Chola overlords.<sup>62</sup> The Paluvettaraya chieftain Kandan Amudan assisted Parantaka I against the Pandyas at Vellur.<sup>63</sup> The Vaidumba chieftain gave his daughter Kalyani to Arinja, a son of Parantaka I. The Anbil copper-plates say that the Vaidumba princess Kalyani was the mother of Sundarachola.<sup>64</sup> During the reign of Parantaka II Siriayavelar, a Velir chieftain led a campaign to Ceylon and died while fighting.<sup>65</sup> The Paluvettaraiyars and Velirs continued their allegiance till end and had matrimonial alliances with the Chola monarchs. During the reign of Rajaraja I, the Nolandas, the Banas and the Vaidumbas also accepted their feudatory position under the great Chola emperor. These feudatories never rose against their overlords and were very submissive.

There is marked difference in the attitude of the feudatories of Vijayalaya line of Cholas and that of the Kulottunga line of Cholas. In the latter period the feudatories, though accepting nominally the overlordship of the Cholas, ruled almost like independent rulers. Once the Kadvaveraya chieftain Kopperunjinga went to the length of imprisoning Rajaraja III.

These instances show the deterioration of Chola Power in the thirteenth century. Whereas, due to the friendly and benevolent policy of the Cholas of Vijayalaya line, the feudatories were very loyal and sincere to them and they enthusiastically participated in all the activities of their overlords.

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- <sup>5</sup> *ARE.*, 51 of 1936.
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- <sup>6</sup> *ARE.*, 286 of 1911.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 154 of 1928 ; 11 of 1931.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 331 of 1927.
- <sup>9</sup> *E.I.*, Vol. IV, pp. 221-225.
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- <sup>15</sup> *E.I.*, Vol. XV, p. 50.
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- <sup>18<sup>a</sup></sup> M. Rajamanickam, *Pandya Varalaru*, p. 82.
- <sup>19</sup> *ARE.*, 34 of 1946-47.
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- <sup>21</sup> *E.I.*, Vol. XXII, No. 34. vv. 25, 28.
- <sup>22</sup> *S.I.I.*, Vol. III, No. 152.
- <sup>23</sup> *ARE.*, 1912, Part II, p. 61.
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- <sup>27</sup> *ARE.*, 18 of 1933-34.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 617 of 1916.
- <sup>29</sup> V. 73.
- <sup>30</sup> II. 37-38.
- <sup>31</sup> *S.I.I.*, Vol. V, No. 647.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, Nos. 885, 886 ; Vol. V, No. 644.
- <sup>33</sup> *E.I.*, Vol. V, p. 77, v. 11.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4.
- <sup>35</sup> *Vikramankadeva charita*, iv, 69, v. 68.
- <sup>36</sup> *ARE.*, 248, 249 of 1923.
- <sup>37</sup> *S.I.I.*, Vol. II, introduction, p. 8.
- <sup>38</sup> *ARE.*, 147 of 1912.
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- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 149 of 1936-37.

- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 274 of 1910.
- <sup>42</sup> *S.I.I.*, Vol. III, No. 205 ; vv. 65-66.
- <sup>43</sup> *ARE.*, 260 of 1915.
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- <sup>45</sup> *E.I.*, Vol. XV, No. 15, Anbil copper-plates, v. 81.
- <sup>46</sup> *S.I.I.*, Vol. IV, No. 1412 ; *ARE*, 616 of 1912.
- <sup>47</sup> *E.I.*, Vol. XXII, No. 34.
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- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 82 of 1907.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 171 of 1894.
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- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 577 of 1920.
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- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 76 of 1932-33.
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## **Medieval Period**

### SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF THE SIDDHA CULT (MEDIEVAL TAMILNADU)

R. VENKATRAMAN

(Madurai University, Madurai)

#### I

THIS PAPER proposes to deal with the sources for the history of the Siddha Cult of Tamilnadu from 900 A.D. to 1676 A.D.

Though all Yogins, who attained *siddhis* or miraculous, magical powers, are generally called *Siddhas*, the term came to denote a school of Tantric Yogis, which was the culmination of the synthesis among the various elements of Vajrayana Buddhism, Saivite Tantricism, magic, alchemy and Hatha Yoga.<sup>1</sup> This synthesis probably occurred first between the seventh and eleventh centuries A.D.<sup>2</sup> in North India and as a consequence there prevails the tradition of the eighty-four siddhas and the Nava-Natha-Siddhas from about the eighth century.

The term 'Siddhas' in this paper denotes a school of Tamil Siddhas which, as pointed out by Zvelebil, is 'one of the most important and interesting off-shoots of the Pan-Indian tantric Yoga movement'.<sup>3</sup>

In the Tamil country there prevails a tradition of the 'Eighteen-Siddhas' (Patinen Sittar), credited with great wisdom, supernatural powers, knowledge of medicine, alchemy, *mantras*, etc.<sup>4</sup> Though they were one of the most fascinating groups, their lives and compositions still form a dark and almost unknown chapter in the cultural history of the Tamils. While reading their works we often wish we know more of the writers and their lives. They leave a very dim sketch of themselves and



they decry speculative philosophy. Many legends<sup>6</sup> prevail about these Siddhas, whose number certainly exceeds the traditional 'Eighteen'. We have more than twelve lists of these 'Eighteen Siddhas', but no two lists tally in full. Further, these lists include Gods<sup>6</sup> (Siva, Subrahmanya, Indra, Dhanvantri, Dakshinamurthy, Nandi, Brahma, Asvini, etc.), celestial damsels (Urvashi and Tilottama), *Rishis* (Agastya, Kausika, Sanaka, Sananda, Sutamuni, Patanjali, Pulastya, Vyagrapada, Atri Rishi, Bharadvaja, Durvasa, Jamadagni, Rishi Sringa, Kasyapa, Mrikandu, Parasara, Valmiki, Vasistha, Vyasa, etc.) and a few Natha Siddhas (Gorakshanath, as Gorakkar, Matsyendranath as Macca-muni, Bhartrihari as Pattiragiri, Nava nadar [Skt. Navanatha], thinking that the term denotes one person). Later a few Tamil Sufi poets and Viramamunivar (Fr. Beschi), the Christian evangelist of the seventeenth century, from Italy together with Allamaprabhu (twelfth century), the Lingayat philosopher-mystic of the Kannada country and Ekanada, the medieval Marathi mystic, were also included in this group of the Tamil Siddhas. It may be said that this number 'Eighteen' in the South is as 'unhistorical' as the number 'Eighty-four' (siddhas) current in the North; both are mystical numbers well attested in Indian tradition.<sup>7</sup>

This stream of the Tamil siddha cult has its source in the Pan-Indian Tantric Yoga, which contains very old elements, 'some of which belong to the religious proto-history and pre-history of India'.<sup>8</sup> Their folklore, though comparatively 'recent' from a strictly chronological point of view, represents contents which are, in fact, extremely archaic, but unrecorded by the 'official' cultural writers, that is, by circles more or less dependent upon a learned tradition.<sup>9</sup> This is the force which is behind the siddha legends and mythology throughout India. The popular legends around Gorakhnath and other Natha siddhas in the North and the siddhas in Tamilnad give expression to the real spiritual longings of the superficially Hinduized masses.<sup>10</sup>

The Tamil Siddha works, especially *Tirumandiram*,<sup>11</sup> present a complicated system in which the lower and the higher elements of human nature tussle with one another. It could not

have been a matter of sudden growth, nor could it have been derived from a single source. It may be surmised that systematization by Tirumular in the ninth century A.D. must have been preceded by centuries of popular beliefs, rites, folk medicines, worship of female deities, fiendesses, certain *mantras* and some kind of *yantras*. The myth of Agastya<sup>12</sup> may be taken as symbolizing these unsystematized folk elements from a hoary past. It is rightly pointed out that 'Agastya as a historical figure is no more than a will o' the wisp but as a tradition he wields an influence which is felt in all walks of Tamilian life'.<sup>13</sup>

"Siddhas in the Tamil land trace their origin to Agastya, and various works on mysticism, worship, medicine, alchemy are in circulation as having come from his pen. Their language is too modern to be older than the fifteenth century A.D."<sup>14</sup> 'The poems are not much as poetry and are not particularly impressive as to their contents either'.<sup>15</sup>

Before taking up an analysis of the sources, we can classify<sup>16</sup> the Siddhas according to their works as follows.

1. Tirumular. His *Tirumandiram* is a class by itself.
2. Siddhas (later to Tirumular) dealing with medicine, Black magic, alchemy and Saktism. They may be called 'practical siddhas'. Their works are enormous.
3. A group of poets who have composed a manageable number of stanzas. Though their outlook is Tantra Yoga, they do not describe any of the practical aspects of the Siddhas like medicine, alchemy, etc. They disapprove of the social set-up and speak of the bliss of the *Samadhi* state. They are more 'idealists'.
4. A few Siddha like poets who have been appended to the Siddha School by posterior generation, or who called themselves Siddhas without properly belonging to the esoteric group itself. Pattinattar (fifteenth century) and Tayumanavar (seventeenth century) are examples of this group.

The first and historically the earliest known Tamil siddha is Tirumular,<sup>17</sup> who claims to have received a new 'revelation' from Nandi.<sup>18</sup> It is usual among the Tamil siddhas themselves

to regard Tirumular as 'the greatest exponent of Yoga in South India, and as the first master...reinterpreting the timeless doctrines within the framework of the Tamil language, culture and literature'.<sup>19</sup>

Tirumular's *Tirumandiram*<sup>20</sup> is the greatest and the earliest treatment of the Tantric Yoga in Tamil. It contains *in nuce* all or almost all the typical features of the later Tamil siddha works. The one exception is that it strongly bears the impact of the Bhakti school, which was still at its height in Tirumular's days.

The *Tirumandiram* consists of nine sections called *tandirams* (Skt. Tantras) of different length. It contains more than 3000 quatrains in the *Kaliviruttam* metre. It is an attempt at the integration of the three highest roads to liberation—Upanishadic knowledge, Yogic techniques and *bhakti*. The salient features of the Tamil Siddha tradition found in this work are as follows :

1. The appearance and development of the embryo (v. v. 451-91).
2. Yoga with its eight limbs—dealt with in the classical order as pointed out in Patanjali's *Yogasutras* 1129 (v. v. 549-639).
3. The eight *mahasiddhis* or great occult powers<sup>21</sup> (640-711).
4. *Kayasiddhi* (724-739).
5. *Khecari Mudra*<sup>22</sup> (799-824).
6. *Amuri Daranai*<sup>23</sup> (845-850).
7. The use of *Cakras*, e.g., *Tiruvambala Cakra* (914-1012), *Tiripura Cakra* (1045-1074), *Bhairava Cakra* (1291-1296), *Sambhavi mandala* (1297-1306), *Bhuvanapati Cakra* (1307-18), and *Navakkari Cakra* (1319-1418).
8. The use of *Mantras*, or *Bhairavi Mantra* (1075-1124).
9. Description of the six plexus in the body with a mention of the number of letters in each (1704-11).
10. Secretion of semen and its 'conquest' by lifting it from *Muladhara* upwards (1923-74).
11. Two other important ingredients of the Tamil

Siddha tradition, viz., alchemy and black magic, are also mentioned in this work.

In the black magic *Tambanam*<sup>24</sup> (997, 1285, 1287), *Mohanam*<sup>25</sup> (998), *Uccadanam*<sup>26</sup> (999), *Maranam*<sup>27</sup> (1000, 1285, 1287), *Vasiyam*<sup>28</sup> (1001, 1285 and 1287), *Akarsaṇam*<sup>29</sup> (1012) and *Ainkayattailam*<sup>30</sup> (998, 1000) are clearly mentioned. The burying of the green palm leaf in the cremation ground for killing the enemy is also mentioned<sup>31</sup> (1000).

The preoccupation of the later works with enchanting beautiful dames, seeing objects at a great distance and to see subtle (or invisible) things can be traced to *Tirumandiram* respectively in the stanzas 908, 822-23, and 909.

12. Almost all the later siddhas were in search of a *Gulikai* (a pill or a philosopher's stone) capable of turning anything into gold. This *gulikai*<sup>32</sup> is mentioned by Tirumular (2054, 2709).

13. The later siddhas sought herbs and minerals with a view to making the body glitter, to restore the blackness of grey hair and to regain youth and attain immortality. All these possibilities were advocated by Tirumular either through *Pranayama* (846, 569, 575, 848) or through *Amuri* (574, 807 and 848).

## II

If paucity of material is a set-back for any investigation, over-abundance of it is equally, or at times a greater set-back which an investigator is confronted with in the case of the later phase of the Siddha cult.

The Usman committee, appointed by the Madras Government to investigate the indigenous systems of medicine, presented its long report, which was published in two parts in 1923 and 1924 respectively. Part I (pp. 139-147) gives a long list of 812 works (ranging from one verse into a few thousand verses each) by 51 siddhas. Subsequently the Department of History of Medicine of the Government College of Integrated Medicine,

Madras, prepared in 1959 an additional list of 732 works by ninety siddhas.<sup>33</sup>

It has been suggested that the cropping up of such a spate of siddha names and spurious works attached to them as well as the historic siddhas may have been due to the interest shown by Sarfoji, the ruler of Tanjavur in the nineteenth century, in the collection of old Tamil manuscripts on various subjects for the building up of his famous Sarasvati Mahal Library, Tanjavur. The royal patronage may have encouraged the fakes to work in full swing to win the royal favour and to make money.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the benefit of the printing press and the encouraging market for the cheap 'folk' editions of these works in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and a few decades of this century has been another stimulus.

Quite a number of these compositions, though not written in a critical manner, flooded the market.<sup>35</sup> The rest are still in palm leaf manuscript form, available in different libraries or collections, such as, (i) The Madras Oriental Manuscript Library ; (ii) Sarasvati Mahal Library, Tanjavur ; (iii) Aduthurai Math at Tiruvaduturai, Tanjavur district 'as well as in some libraries in the West, like the Library of the British Museum, or Copenhagen Royal Library, the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, the Vatican Library and so on.'<sup>36</sup> A list of such manuscripts is already available in the Madras Medical Journal.<sup>37</sup> "These works seem to have been written at different periods of time, but the manuscripts that are now available do not seem to be very old."<sup>38</sup>

Some of these works contain only one or two verses, and many range between five and two hundred. And voluminous works containing many hundreds or thousands of verses appear to be very late production, 'borrowing verses from the previous works'<sup>39</sup> or interpolating with modern Western ideas or inventions and publishing them in the name of some one, often Agastya.

Thus in one of the medical works, Agastya speaks of syphilis as "paranki Viyati", the Frankish disease.<sup>40</sup> *Agastiyar Guru Nadi Suttiram* mentions about seminal animalcules, discovered in Western medicine by Ludwig Hamm in 1677.<sup>41</sup> *Agastiyar Paripuranam* is quoted<sup>42</sup> as proof of Agastya's



'knowledge of elemental progression in terms of numbered atomic units... long before Mendeleyev'.<sup>43</sup> In the stanza quoted<sup>44</sup> the great Agastya says how and in what measure the atomic units of mercury, neganda (*karunocci*) and copper on the one hand, and mercury and *black ocimum sanctum* (*karuntulasi*) and iron on the other hand make copper and iron into gold. To each copper atom of 29 units, 40 atomic units of mercury and 10 atomic units of neganda are added, altogether making 79 atomic units of gold.<sup>45</sup> Similarly to each iron atom of 26 units, 40 and 13 atomic units respectively of mercury and *black ocimum sanctum* are added to make up 79 atomic units of gold.<sup>46</sup>

Number of modern inventions can be met with in *Bhogar 7000*, a work of nearly seven thousand verses, held in great esteem by the siddha medical and Yoga practitioners as one of the most authentic works. This work refers to steam locomotive as Pugairatham (III 216-220), steam ships as *Niravikkappal* (V. 115), Telescope as Marakkalakkannadi (V. 119), and air ship as Akayakundu or Pirankuviddai (III 390-93). In this work Bhogar, the most popular siddha, frequently describes his visit to China, Mecca and Rome, where, he says, he met Immanuel (III 217). Bhogar blesses a disciple to live as gloriously as Kumangudi Mastan, a popular Tamil Sufi, who lived in the nineteenth century. Bhogar says elsewhere<sup>47</sup> that he lived for 12,000 years in the Frankish country (parngiyuda Nattile).

Certain works attributed to these siddhas (prior to Sattamuni) might have been written by the disciples incorporating their master's message and published in their master's name. Probably this trend continued later and hence appeared numerous works.

Most of the later works are purely medical. Rest of them combine medicine, yoga, alchemy, magic, saktism, etc., in various proportion a sketch of which is given hereunder.

In spite of the enormous interpolation of verses containing modern ideas of meaningless legends, a 'core' containing authentic feature of the Siddha cult is discernible, whether the work is in the name of a historic siddha or unhistoric persons like gods



and *Rishis*. Thanks to the plagiarists they have not distorted this 'core' in their enthusiasm to produce a spate of works. They have presented it in their own words together with unmanageable accretions.

Though dating any particular work is impossible, a general dating of the 'core' works may be attempted here. It belongs to a period ranging between 1400 and 1675, when all the important later siddhas lived and practised their cult. The two last great siddhas must be Bhogar of Palani (or Bhogar II c. 1616-1646) and his disciple Pulippani I (c. 1646-1676), who founded an Ashram, still existing at Palani with the twelfth pontiff having assumed charge in 1976.

We have evidence to prove these siddhas held all their practices as very secret and conveyed them, if at all, in an esoteric language only to a few chosen disciples after testing their steadfastness for twelve years.

Frequent mention is made in various works of one Sattamuni's work called *Ditcai* (Skt. *Diksha*), meaning Revelation, being torn by a certain Mular (probably the chief of the *Mula* *varga*) for breaking the secret tradition. Thereafter, Sattamuni joins the Agastya group, which approves of the writing. Of all the episodes this one finds the maximum mention in almost all works.

So, we may infer that the writing down of their esoteric practices starts with Sattamuni (c. 1575). The written works of the 'practical' siddhas mostly carry a curse preventing the owner of the book from lending or parting with the work. The curse ranges from death due to lightning striking him or the ruin of the entire family due to the same cause. As the poems of the idealist siddhas do not carry any such curse, it may be concluded that this group, beginning with *Sivavakya*, started writing from 1400 and their works, together with a few late works, have been compiled in an anthology called *Siddhar Nanakkovai*, whereas the 'esoteric' group did so only from 1575 up to 1676 (1676 to the beginning of this century may be the period of plagiarism). Teraiyar, one of the greatest siddhas to write on medicine, and his disciple Yugi muni, whose works

on medicine and physiology are popular with siddha medical practitioners, are to be placed between 1575 and 1676. It is to be noted that Teraiyar mentions the name of Vemanna, the popular Telugu poet of the sixteenth century, in his work *Mahakarisa* (verse 5).<sup>48</sup>

Regarding the 'practical' siddhas before 1575, Bhogar of Saduragiri (Bhogar I c. 1546-1576) is the most important and renowned, having a number of disciples, among whom Konanar, Maccamuni, Karuvurar, etc., are the very famous contemporaries of Sattamuni. We do not know much about the siddhas of this group prior to Bhogar I. Pusundar, the greatest Yogic siddha, in whose name there prevail a number of legends and also a method of Pranayama, Kancamalai siddha and Kalangi, supposed to be the Guru of Bhogar I, are to be placed between 1400 and 1546.

### III

Of the spate of works ascribed to the siddhas, the maximum number are on Medicine and among them the largest number go in the name of Agastya. Hundreds of such works by mediocre composers using colloquial and ungrammatical language<sup>49</sup> have already been published. These works are of the nature of materia medica or pharmacognosy with some descriptions about the techniques of preparation.

As the language of these medical works show much of Muslim influence, it is suggested that 'all these works on medicine, purported to have been composed by the "Eighteen Siddhas", may have been written by the Muslims of Kayalpattinam'.<sup>50</sup> Their language apart, 'the contents are also denied as being based on experience of medicine'.<sup>51</sup> It is held that these works are fathered on some siddhas so that people may accept them as authentic.<sup>52</sup>

As these medical works often use peculiar phrases or jargons, to hide the names of herbs, minerals, birds and animals (whose bile, bones and excreta are used in their medical

preparations) many *Nigandus* or lexicons have sprung up giving all their synonyms. Of the many such lexicons, *Sattamuni Nigandu* is very popular among the siddha medical practitioners.

#### IV

Portions on Yoga speak of it in alchemical symbols. For them 'Semen is the Rasa (mercury), the breath is the herb and *Mulagni* at *Muladhara* is the oven and body is the crucible'.<sup>53</sup> They repeatedly speak of a secretion from the head as capable of giving eternal youth and immortality and this they call as *Jayanir*,<sup>54</sup> *Madiyamudam*,<sup>55</sup> *Kalaimadipal*,<sup>56</sup> etc. The body of an adept who has a taste of this *Madiyamudam* (the *Amrita* from the Moon) glitters like gold<sup>57</sup> and becomes as strong as a pillar made of granite<sup>58</sup> and the sword used against such a body breaks into nine pieces.<sup>59</sup>

#### V

Black magic is dealt with, at times elaborately too, in many of the siddha works. As already pointed out, *Tirumandiram* of Tirumular is the forerunner of this trend too. While *Tirumandiram* and *Agastiyar Purna Kaviyam 1000* deal with only six of the *Asta Karmas*, *Nandeeswarar Kalai Nanam-1000*, *Dhanvantri Dandaka Kalai Nanam-900*, *Agastiyar Amuda Kalai Nanam-1200*, etc., deal with all the eight elaborately.<sup>60</sup> Works called *Dandakam*, *Kalai Nanam*, *Dandaka Kalai Nanam*, *Jala Nigandu*, *Karukkida*, *Batsani* speak mostly of Black magic as means of killing or torturing an enemy, making invisible one's own form, making the ruler obey one's wishes, seeing things in the *Patala* (nether world), bewitching a damsel so that she falls in love and follows one and fulfilling many such base desires.<sup>61</sup> *Mantras* to control horrible female deities and fiendesses, and with their help to torture an enemy, or win a great fortune, like a treasure trove, are also dealt with in detail in many works.

Preparation of collyriums for purposes mentioned above is

another feature copiously dealt with in various works. The ingredients include hundreds of birds and animals, mostly of black colour, such as black cat, black donkey, black owls, black dog, etc.

## VI

Siddhas, right from Tirumular, are worshippers of Sakti. The later siddhas worship *Bala* as *Valai* for success in Yoga and to attain *Madiyanrudam*<sup>62</sup> for immortality. Her *mantra*,<sup>63</sup> called the 'three lettered mantra', is frequently mentioned in almost all siddha works. Further it is emphatically said that 'all the siddhas worship only the *Cakra* consisting of forty-three triangles',<sup>64</sup> whose description and method of worship are subjects finding repeated treatment in the siddha works.

## VII

Of the many works on alchemy, *Sattamuni Nigandu-1200* is generally accepted as the most popular and is available with many siddha (medicine and yoga) practitioners. It gives a long list of 112 *Uparasas* (v. v. 44-154) and 32 types of Arsenics or poisons (v. v. 190-211). Many other works give a list of places where *Punir*,<sup>65</sup> an important ingredient, for the purification and transmutation of metals, is available.

## VIII

Perhaps no other literature in Tamil has raised such controversy in evaluation as the works of the siddhas, who on the one hand have been extolled as 'a remarkable group of free thinkers and a fascinating body of revolutionaries, who commanded respect among the people by the force of their personalities and their ideas'<sup>66</sup> and as 'the repository of sublime truths with their aim being 'to get at the eternal light...and

forming the noblest order who viewed the Vedanta and siddhanta alike'.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand they have been branded as 'plagiarists and impostors....Being eaters of opium and dwellers in the land of dream, their conceit knew no bounds'.<sup>68</sup>

Pambatti siddha's claim of 'transforming all the three worlds into shining gold and to live on equal footing with the Lord of Lords' makes a modern scholar raise his brow and ask "Is this a mad bragging of a deranged mind, or did the siddha really believe, on some experimental grounds, that he and his mystical brothers were capable of such enormous and preponderous deeds?".<sup>69</sup>

All these varied opinions are due to the lack of a reliable oral tradition and the mixture of the noble and base elements in their works.

Though these works are silent about the political condition of their time, which is understandable, because the siddhas mostly renounced the society, the social set-up, and the brahminical rituals are often ridiculed by the 'idealist' siddhas. But the esoteric group has its heterogenous rituals. If the names and myths mentioned in the works of the esoteric group are properly classified and interpreted we can understand certain important events or changes that took place within the group.

The names Gorakkar (Gorakhsa) and Pattiragiri (Bhartrihari) symbolise the impact of the 'Practical' and 'Ideal' groups respectively, of the Natha Siddhas. The name *Romarisi*, instead of denoting a person, is to be taken to symbolise the impact of the Latin alchemists.

The myth of Bhogar's visit to Mecca (Bhogar 7000-II 228-231), China (*ibid.*, III. 22) and Rome (III. 216-217) may be taken to mean the influence of Sufism, Taoism or Tantric Buddhism (if China means Mahachina, i.e., Tibet) and Western alchemy.\*

If the available materials are properly organised and interpreted a sufficiently reliable history of the Tamil siddha cult can be written.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Zvelebil, Kamil V., *The Poets of the Powers*, Rider and Company, London, 1973, p. 29.
- <sup>2</sup> Eliade, Mircea, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, Pantheon Book Inc., New York, 1958, p. 304.  
At that time the Bhakti movement was taking place in the Tamil country.
- <sup>3</sup> Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- <sup>4</sup> Arunachalam, M., *Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru—14th Century*, Gandhi Vidyalayam, Tiruccirrambalam, Mayuram, 1969, p. 343.
- <sup>5</sup> The modern legend that *Bhogar* is a pre-Christian-Chinese Taoist is from Dr. V. V. Ramana Sastri, in his 'The doctrinal culture and tradition of the Siddhas' in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, IV, The Ramakrishana Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 303-319. This has misled S. Das Gupta to place the Bhogar School prior to the Natha School, vide, *Obscure Religious Cults*, Calcutta, 1969, pp. 192-193.
- <sup>6</sup> See f.n. 18.
- <sup>7</sup> Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- <sup>9</sup> Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 302.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.
- <sup>11</sup> Like the Sanskrit Tantra works, Tirumular's *Tirumandiram*, the earliest and the model for other Tamil Siddha works, is the culmination of Tamil religious literature into which flow the Vedic and popular cults.
- <sup>12</sup> Agastya is held to be the "father of Tamil" and the first grammarian of this language. The first reference to this tradition is in Nakkirar's commentary to *Irayanar Agapporul* ('Grammar of love') belonging to eighth-ninth centuries A.D.
- <sup>13</sup> T. P. Meenakshisundaram, *The Tamil Plutarch*, cited by Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
- <sup>14</sup> T. P. Meenakshisundaram, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
- <sup>15</sup> Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
- <sup>16</sup> This classification is based on the one suggested by Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18, with a minor modification.
- <sup>17</sup> Tirumular is claimed both by the Tamil Siddha school and the Tamil Bhakti school. He is the only person to be included both in the "18 siddha" list and the "sixty-three Nayanmar" list. His concept of the liberation and its means (i.e., Divine grace) distinguishes him from the later siddhas. Hence, Tirumular has to be called a *Mahesvara Siddha*, while the rest as the *Rasesvara Siddhas*.
- <sup>18</sup> Nandi may symbolize another set of unsystematized archaic traditions different from that of Agastya. In the Tamil Siddha works repeated



mention is made of a rivalry between two schools, namely, *Kailaya Vargam*, tracing its origin from Agastya and *Mula Vargam*, from Tirumular and Nandi.

Later a third group tracing its origin from Dhanvantri appears in the seventeenth century. Teraiyar and Yugi Muni are the stalwarts of this group, which may have migrated from Andhra.

The inclusion of these mythical persons, Agastya, a sage Nandi, a demi-god and Dhanvantri, a god, may be the fore-runner for the inclusion of many gods and sages into the list of Tamil siddhas.

- <sup>19</sup> Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
- <sup>20</sup> We follow here the Tiruppanantal edition, published by T. M. Kumar-aguruparon Pillai, Srivaikundam, 1960.
- <sup>21</sup> While Patanjali (Yoga sutra III. 37) warns that the possession of the siddhis is ultimately an obstacle in the attainment of true *samadhi*, this classical attitude is not followed by most Tamil siddhas, including Tirumular.
- <sup>22</sup> An important aspect of Tantric yoga in the arresting of the mobility of breath, thought and semen. Verses 64-70 of *The Goraksa Sataka*, a fundamental text of the Natha siddhas, deal with this mudra as a means of arresting the semen. See Briggs, George Weston, *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Yogis*, 1st edn., 1938, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi (Reprint), 1973, pp. 297-98.
- <sup>23</sup> The real meaning of the word *Amuri*, very frequently used in the later siddha works, is enigmatic. It is taken to mean urine also. Tirumular advocates the drinking of *Amuri* for prolonging youth.
- <sup>24</sup> Skt. *Stambana*, meaning, the magic art of paralysing a person's activity.
- <sup>25</sup> The magic art of fascinating a person.
- <sup>26</sup> The magic art of causing a person to quit his place.
- <sup>27</sup> The magic art of causing one's death by incantation.
- <sup>28</sup> The magic art of bringing a person under control.
- <sup>29</sup> Magic art of summoning an absent person by incantation.
- <sup>30</sup> 'An oil made of five ingredients (?)' used in the black magic. This oil is repeatedly mentioned in the magical portions of the later siddha works for ghastly purposes.
- <sup>31</sup> Later works elaborately describe the preparation of a doll, made of dough, in the place of the palm leaf, and pricking it with nails, etc., for torturing or killing the enemy.
- <sup>32</sup> Later siddhas were much preoccupied with the various *Gulikais* for a variety of obnoxious purposes.
- <sup>33</sup> I saw the typed Mss. in the College of Indian Medicine, Palayamkottai, in 1975. This new list brings to light fifty new siddhas, not found in the Usman report, which is also silent about eleven siddhas found in this new list.
- <sup>34</sup> Arunachalam, M., *op. cit.*, p. 345.  
This plausible suggestion needs proper investigation.

- <sup>35</sup> Of the 812 works mentioned in the Usman Committee, 120 are found in one anthology, *Agasthya Manunivar Sillaraikkovai*, published by E. Rm. Gurusamy Kone, Madurai, 1914.  
Of the 732 works mentioned in the list, prepared by the Government College of Integrated Medicine, Madras, 290 are found in an anthology, *Vado Vaidya Yoga Nana Sastirattirattu* (hereafter VVYNS), running into ten volumes from the same publisher mentioned above, between 1914 and 1918.
- <sup>36</sup> Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
- <sup>37</sup> Subba Reddy, D. V., *Madras Medical Journal*, 2, 2. (1951), cited by Jaggi, O. P., *Yogic and Tantric Medicine*, p. 126.
- <sup>38</sup> Jaggi, O. P., *op. cit.*, p. 126.
- <sup>39</sup> *Agasthyar Vaitthiyam-2000* is a case in point. Vide Olaganatha Pillai, L., *A Descriptive Catalogue of Tamil Manuscripts* in Sarasvati Mahal Library, Vol. III, Tanjore, 1927, p. 8.
- <sup>40</sup> Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, Note 70, p. 139.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- <sup>42</sup> Yogi, S. D. S. (ed.), *Karoi Siddhar Kanaka Vaippu*, Siddhasram, Madras (yr. not mentioned), Editor's Introduction, 42ff.
- <sup>43</sup> Mendeleyev (1834-1907), a Russian chemist, invented the periodic table in 1869.
- <sup>44</sup> Eduppadudan rasattinile Narpadappa  
En Mahane Karunocci adanir patte  
Toduppadudan Sembadu Irupattonbane  
Toyumada Tangamenat tulakkamagum  
Koduppadudan rasattanuvil narpan kollum  
Kollumada Karundulasi orupan munre  
Aduppadudan Karirumbinil irupanare  
Amaiyumada Karumpon Semponnam katchi.
- <sup>45</sup> Yogi, S. D. S. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 42ff.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42ff.
- <sup>47</sup> *Bhogar Nana Suttiram-8* (VVYNS. I) 1924, v. 4.
- <sup>48</sup> Thyagarajan, R. (ed.), *Teraiyar Mahakaraisal*, Madras, 1974.
- <sup>49</sup> *Kalaikkalanjiyam*, Vol. I, Madras, 1954, p. 9.
- <sup>50</sup> Olaganatha Pillai, L., *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- <sup>51</sup> Muhammad Abdullah Saheb, *Anubhoga Vaidya Navanitham*, I, Siddha Medical Works Publishing Committee, Dandayudapani Temple, Palani, (2nd edn., 1975), p. III.
- <sup>52</sup> Arunachalam M., *Tamil, Ilakkiya Varalaru, 15th Century*, Gandhi Vidyalayam, Mayuram, 1969, p. 317.
- <sup>53</sup> *Daksinamurthi Siwayoga Rasa Gulikai-14*, Hindu Press, Madras, 1882, v. 2.
- <sup>54</sup> *Tiruvalluvar aruliya Nana Vettiyan 1500*, B. Ratna Naicker Sons, Madras, 1965, v. 919.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 926.

- <sup>56</sup> *Kurmanandar Nana Suttiram*, VVYNS-IV, 1914, v. 15.
- <sup>57</sup> *Sattamuni Suttiram-25*, VVYNS-VII, 1914, v. 15.
- <sup>58</sup> *Sattamuni Suttiram-20*, *ibid.*, vols. 12-13.
- <sup>59</sup> *Tiruvalluvar . . . Nana Vettiyan 1500*, *op. cit.*, v. 926.
- <sup>60</sup> Vide f.n. 24-29. With these six, *Bedanam*, causing discord between two persons and *vidvesanam*, creating hatred between persons who are friendly, complete the list of *Asta Karma* (The eight magical arts).
- <sup>61</sup> Important works dealing with black magic
- (i) *Agastiyar Amuda Kalai Nanam-1200*
  - (ii) *Agastiyar Purna Kaviyam-1000*
  - (iii) *Agastiyar Nalu Kanda Jalam-1200*
  - (iv) *Bhogar-700*
  - (v) *Bhogar-7000*
  - (vi) *Dhanvantri Dandaka Kalai Nanam-900*
  - (vii) *Dhanvantri Karukkada Nigandu-300*
  - (viii) *Nandisar Kalai Nanam-1000*
  - (ix) *Tiruvalluvar Aruliye Nana Vettiyan-1500*
- and a host of other works. Many describe graphically the odicult, which consists of making a doll as an effigy of the enemy in dough, and sticking it with pins, nails and the sting of a black scorpion, and then burying in the cremation ground in order to torture or kill the enemy.
- <sup>62</sup> Nectar from the Sahasrara  
*Dhanvantiri Karukkada Nigandu-300*, B. Ratna Naicker Sons, Madras (yr. not mentioned), V. 293.  
*Agastiyar Tattuvam-300*, E. Rm. Gurusamy Konar Sons, Madurai, 1941, V. 300.
- <sup>63</sup> Aim Klim Sau is the *Bala Mantra*.
- <sup>64</sup> It is the famous *Sri Cakra*.  
*Sangici Siddhar Nana Suttiram-16*, VVYNS-V, 1914, v. 3.
- <sup>65</sup> A white substance that bubbles out from the fuller's earth soil. It is collected on a full moon night during the month of Panguni (March-April), treated with Amuri (urine?) and combined with Kalluppu (rock salt) and Vedyuppu (potassium nitrate) to yield *Muppu*, the philosopher's stone.
- <sup>66</sup> C. and H. Jesudasan, *A History of Tamil Literature*, cited by Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- <sup>67</sup> Purnalingam Pillai, cited by Zvelebil, *ibid.*, p. 8.
- <sup>68</sup> Srinivasa Aiyangar, M., quoted by Zvelebil, *ibid.*, p. 8.
- <sup>69</sup> Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

# INSCRIPTIONAL SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF THE CHOLAS OF THE EARLY MEDIEVAL SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY

Y. SUBBARAYALU  
(*Madurai University, Madurai*)

## I

THE IMPORTANT primary sources for the history of the Cholas of the early medieval South Indian history are inscriptions, religious monuments and literature. These are supplemented to a small extent by numismatics and foreign (Arab and Chinese) accounts. Among the above, the religious monuments (mainly temples) are important in two ways: (1) They are the main repositories of the thousands of inscriptions useful for the medieval historian. (2) They themselves constitute a source when of course they are reliably dated by the inscriptions which they have preserved. Though the literature of this period is voluminous it has only a supplementary value in certain fields. It is fairly useful for the religious history of this period and with the methodology employed in modern socio-linguistics it can be made to yield some interesting data bearing on the social history also. The most important source of this period is undeniably the inscriptions.

Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, the prolific historian of the Chola period, has given a short but complete account of the entire sources of the Chola history in his *magnum opus*, *The Cholas*.<sup>1</sup> Two recent works may turn out to be handy reference volumes to professional historians. One of them is a *Topographical List of Inscriptions of the States of Tamilnadu and Kerala*, prepared

by the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras, under the supervision of Professor T. V. Mahalingam six years back.<sup>2</sup> Nearly 16,000 (sixteen thousand) inscriptions extending up to A.D. 1300 have been included in this list. Unfortunately the publication of this work has been delayed. Last year a list of published Chola inscriptions with a codified content index was published in the *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (Tokyo), No. 11.<sup>3</sup>

From the two works just mentioned the spatial and king-wise distribution of both the published and unpublished Chola inscription can be easily tabulated. This distribution table supplies a necessary desideratum. There are nearly 9,000 inscriptions<sup>4</sup> for the entire Chola rule of four centuries from about A.D. 850. This forms nearly 35 per cent of about 26,000 Tamil inscriptions noticed so far. For a comparative estimate it may be mentioned that the inscriptions of the Pandyas, another important Tamil dynasty, constitute only 18 per cent of the total Tamil inscriptions and the Tamil inscriptions of the Vijayanagar rulers constitute about 16 per cent of the same. The Vijayanagar rulers have of course large number of inscriptions in the Kannada and Telugu languages also whereas the Chola and the Pandya dynasties have only a few in these languages.

## II

The main concentration of the Chola inscriptions is found in the five Tamil districts of Tanjavur, Tiruchirappalli, South Arcot, Chengalpat (Chingleput) and North Arcot. Most of these are written in Tamil language alone. Only some (less than a hundred) are bilingual being written in Tamil and Sanskrit and a handful are in Sanskrit alone. Almost all of these are found on the stone walls of the surviving temples and a few on copper-plates and bronze images. The inscriptions belonging to the first hundred years of the Chola rule (i.e., up to 950) are usually short consisting of about ten lines. Later they become fairly lengthy, some extreme cases running to many hundreds of lines like the copper-plate inscriptions of Rajaraja I and Rajendra I.

It may be noted from the distribution table that there are marked variations in the king-wise distribution of the inscriptions. These variations can be correlated to the political importance of the individual reigns. On the whole there were twenty-one kings in the Chola dynasty who ruled as independent sovereigns. Four others figured only as joint rulers. Among the twenty-one independent kings fourteen are found to have more than hundred inscriptions each. Seven kings out of these fourteen are found to have more than five hundred inscriptions each and they, excepting one, i.e., Vikrama Chola, ruled each for twenty-nine years and above. Vikrama Chola, who had an independent rule of only fifteen years, therefore, presents an interesting case for study.

Apart from this seeming correlation between the extent of a reign-period and the number of inscriptions of that period, correlations of such kind should always be sought and tested in any aspect of the economic history of the period or for that matter in social and political histories also for a correct understanding of the concerned problem. There is a difficulty involved in the study of such correlations. That is introduced by the incomplete publication of the inscriptions.

Of the estimated total of 9,000 Chola inscriptions, only about 3,500 inscriptions (or 39 per cent) have been edited and published by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and some of the former Princely States.<sup>5</sup> For the rest of the inscriptions only brief summaries in English are available in the Annual Reports on Epigraphy published by the ASI. No uniform and systematic method was followed in preparing these summaries. In recent years the summaries are somewhat more detailed. These can be handled usefully by those who are very familiar with the published inscriptions. In any case the summaries are poor substitutes for the original texts. Even though the estampages and the preliminary transcripts of these inscriptions are available with the Office of the Chief Epigraphist for Government of India they are not easily accessible to all and even if accessible will be only of limited use to a historian not himself a well-trained epigraphist. So naturally a professional historian has to make the fullest possible use of the published texts only. But he will have to be



very careful while quantifying and making decisive statements since his data are defective in that they represent only two-fifths of the whole thing.

Now the actual use of the inscriptions may be noted. Contrasting the Tamil inscriptions generally with the Kannada ones J. Duncan M. Derrett has observed as follows :<sup>6</sup>

"For historical purposes the Kannada inscriptions are superior to those in Tamil. In the Tamil country, down on the plains, records were inscribed on the walls of the temples, and available space was generally reserved for business details, not all of which interest us now, seeing that our first duty is to establish the chronology before we can attempt to clothe that skeleton with economic and sociological flesh and cultural adornment."

This observation though meant as a criticism actually highlights the salient features of the inscriptions of the Tamil country.

### III

It is true that the dating of these inscriptions is a problem and it can never be as accurate as that worked out for the Kannada inscriptions which are copious in calendrical details. But the position is not so desperate. About 80 per cent of the Chola inscriptions can be dated in the Christian era with an accuracy of one or two years. The rest can be dated within the limits of a single reign-period or within a few decades or to one century. Basing on certain characteristic features the Chola rule can be divided into four major periods. This periodization<sup>7</sup> has been found quite useful and just sufficient for the analytical treatment of many non-political aspects of this time. About 90 per cent of the inscriptions can be easily assigned to this or that of the four periods.

Once this kind of basic chronology is established the subsequent study of these inscriptions is very rewarding since the 'business details' are given elaborately. When Derrett says that 'not all of these details interest us now', he seems to view these from the point of political history only. All these details are

actually found essential in making out 'the economic and sociological flesh and cultural adornment'. These details can be put to varied use : the prevailing state system, the agrarian conditions, the organization of the society with its developing caste system and its locality assemblies and of course the religious practices of the people can all be studied with tolerable precision. The inscriptions are quite dependable in all these studies. Nilakanta Sastri's monumental work on the Cholas alone is sufficient to show the fund of information available from these inscriptions. In recent years a number of Doctoral theses have been produced or are under preparation on various aspects using the Chola inscriptions only.

No doubt the inscriptions are to certain extent biased towards the religious practices since they were meant primarily to be records of religious charities. There is not much difficulty in recognizing this bias while treating non-religious aspects. The veracity of the inscriptions is also generally beyond doubt. There are very few Chola inscriptions which can be dubbed as spurious.

The kind of methodology employed may be expected to control the quality of the results. The conventional method has been to take down notes on cards or slips (a quarter of foolscap sheets) and to collate the matter from diverse cards to write on any aspect. If carried out meticulously this kind of source cards or slips can yield ample material for systematic treatment with a minimum of expenditure. This is but a tedious process. The most serious drawback in this process is that it usually ignores the contextual analysis thereby resulting in inadequate understanding of the inscriptions and in the loss of otherwise much useful material. The consequence would be insufficient treatment of any problem. This defect is apparent in most earlier studies whose ranges were vast both in space and time generally. I shall cite some typical instances from Nilakanta Sastri's *The Cholas*. This work is quite exhaustive as far as the political history is concerned. But in the chapters on Government, Taxation, Population, and Agriculture and Land Tenures there are many lacunae. In fact, the learned Professor himself has felt the description in these chapters as very imperfect, as, in his opinion, 'it has to be pieced

together from scanty material, scattered over a wide area and as yet not fully understood'. But the material is not scanty as may be seen in his work itself. For instance, the author's treatment of the administrative divisions in just one paragraph is very scanty. Using almost the same material I have written a 150-page monograph<sup>8</sup> which, I feel, still is not exhaustive. The Professor's understanding of the constitution and working of the *Ur*, the locality assembly of the peasant villages, is limited and defective.<sup>9</sup> Even in the case of the *Sabha*, the communal assembly of the Brahman villages, to whose understanding he has contributed the most, he has not clarified certain crucial aspects, such as *kudumbu* which was originally wrongly translated as 'ward' and is still current.<sup>10</sup> His treatment of taxes is also not satisfactory. The random inventory of tax terms which he has made does not clarify the central issues. In the light of a recent systematic inventory of the very same tax terms<sup>11</sup> there is no justification for his statement that 'to establish the incidence of so complex a system of taxes and dues, ... would always be a difficult task; and in the actual state of our evidence, utterly impossible'.<sup>11</sup>

#### IV

My intention in producing these instances is not just to point out the defects. The point is that the conventional notes-taking method could not be expected to yield a better picture. That method could be useful and exhaustive only in small-scale studies. Thus Nilakanta Sastri's separate treatment of Uttaramerur, a flourishing Brahman settlement of the Chola times, with the *Sabha* is a brilliant piece of work to this day. This work used only about sixty inscriptions. The difficulty arises when we deal with a large number of inscriptions. For this purpose we need a different technique.

I think only an intensive contextual content analysis of the inscriptions and application of quantitative methods to deal with the data thus obtained can help in the proper reconstruction of the Chola history. For that purpose the modern computer can be of much use. But computer is a costly gadget which not every one

of us can afford to use. Moreover, computer technique has its own limitations when applied to human disciplines. The best practicable thing would be to use the handsorting punched cards. From personal experience I strongly feel the employment of punched cards for the analysis of inscriptional data is a must. No doubt the punched cards are costly when compared to the conventional cards, at least ten times for the same dimensions. But the investment is worth making since one punched card can replace more than hundred conventional cards. For instance, in a project for the study of names of persons in the Chola inscriptions Professor Karashima of Tokyo University and I have used a variety of the punched cards which could accommodate about three hundred different kinds of data relating to the names and titles of persons with the dates and findspots of the inscriptions.<sup>12</sup> Not only these cards can accommodate each so many varied data, they also facilitate the easy and rapid statistical analysis of the data spatially and in time. Such varied analysis as using combinations and permutations which would not be possible or would never have been thought of while using the conventional cards could be easily accomplished by the use of the punched cards. For the general study of the inscriptions one punched card may be sufficient for one inscription. I am myself using a variety to record about hundred items of information spread over a hundred and fifty localities (*taluks*) and a hundred time-units (=reign-period). These cards are found useful for easy recording and storage of varied data, identification and retrieval at short notice and analysis of the data for manifold uses. Unfortunately there seems to be no stationery company in India interested in the production of these cards.

The difficulties generally faced by the students of the Chola or any inscriptions are the slow publication of the texts and the lack of a comprehensive index to all the noticed inscriptions. The difficulty due to the slow publication of the texts can be rectified to some extent if the State Archaeology Department of Tamilnadu and the interested Universities of Tamilnadu co-operate earnestly with the Office of Chief Epigraphist, ASI. The 'Topographical List' prepared by the Madras University once published may solve to a large extent the second difficulty. The other 'List' mentioned

above is useful as far as published inscriptions are concerned. This List contains particulars of periodization and a codified content index. The index though not exhaustive covers nineteen major items of data found in inscriptions. This kind of data index may be attempted profitably for the unpublished inscriptions also. There is a third peculiar difficulty due to poor marketing of the publications of the ASI. It is a chronic problem of the Publication Division of Government of India.

### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cholas*, University of Madras, first edition, Vol. I, 1935 ; Vol II, 1937. Second edition, single volume, 1955. The appendices of select inscriptions included in the first edition have been omitted in the second edition.
- <sup>2</sup> From personal knowledge. The writer was actively associated with this work for four years during 1966-1970 as one of the two Research Fellows employed for the purpose.
- <sup>3</sup> B. Sitaraman, Noboru Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu, 'A List of the Tamil Inscriptions of the Chola Dynasty', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, No. 11 (Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo, 1976), pp. 87-181.
- <sup>4</sup> *Vide* distribution list in the Appendix.
- <sup>5</sup> *Inscriptions of the Pudukkottai State*, 1929.  
*South Indian Inscriptions*, ASI, Vols. I to XIX.  
*Epigraphia Indica*, ASI, Vols. I to XXXVII.  
*Epigraphia Carnatica*, Government of Mysore, Vols. III, IV, IX, X, and XIV.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Hoysalas* (Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 206-07.
- <sup>7</sup> First suggested and used by Noboru Karashima and B. Sitaraman in their 'Revenue Terms in Chola Inscriptions', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, No. 5, 1972. See also the work cited in reference no. 3 above.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Political Geography of the Chola Country* (Dept. of Archaeology, Government of Madras, 1973).
- <sup>9</sup> I have presented a paper regarding this in the ICHR Seminar on Social and Economic History of Tamilnadu held at the University of Madras on 1-3 February, 1977.
- <sup>10</sup> The term *kudumbu* indicated a kind of grouping based on land-holdings.
- <sup>11</sup> Cited in reference no. 7 above.

- <sup>12</sup> For preliminary report on the results see : Noboru Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu, 'A Statistical Study of Personal Names in Tamil Inscriptions (Interim report II)', *Computational Analyses of Asian and African Languages* (National Inter-University Research Institute of Asian and African Languages and Cultures, Tokyo) No. 3 (1976), pp. 9-20.



# TAMIL LITERARY SOURCES FOR THE EARLY MEDIEVAL HISTORY OF TAMILNADU

S. JEYAPRAGASAN  
(*Madurai University, Madurai*)

## I

NEARLY 50,000 verses (about 2,00,000 lines) and 4,000 pages of prose constitute the Tamil Literature of the early medieval Tamilnadu.<sup>1</sup> No historian of Tamilnadu has used this literature exhaustively for writing the history of the Tamils.<sup>2</sup>

Literature, whether secular or not, can be used for writing history. It is a social institution, using as its medium language which again is a social institution.<sup>3</sup> The Marxists mainly stress the relationship between literature and society; according to them literature of an age is conditioned by the society of that age. Marx says that it is 'their (men's) social existence that determines their consciousness'.<sup>4</sup> According to F. R. Leavis, "Poetry matters because of the kind of poet who is more alive than other people, more alive in his own age. He is, as it were, at the most conscious point of the race in his time".<sup>5</sup> This means that the 'essence' or 'vitality' of an age can be traced from the works of great poets. Some of the Tamil poets of this period were really profound.

The Tamil literature of this period may be classified under seven groups :

### 1. Devotional Hymns :

- a. The Eleven Saivaite cantos
- b. Nalayivat-tivviya-prabandha of the Vaishnavaites

2. The Epics and the Puranas :
  - a. Tamil Epics :
    1. Silappadikaram
    2. Manimekalai
    3. Perunkadai
    4. Civaka Cintamani
    5. Periya Puranam
  - b. Adopted Epics :
    1. Kamba Ramayanam
    2. Villi Bharatam
3. Court Poetry :
  1. Nandik Kalampakam
  2. Muvarula
  3. Kalinkattup Parani
  4. Rajaraja Natakam, etc.<sup>6</sup>
4. Didactic Literature :
  1. Tirukkural<sup>7</sup>
  2. Naladiyar
  3. Acarak-kovai
  4. Arunkalceppu
  5. Araneric Caram
  6. Poems of Avvaiyar
5. Commentaries :
  - a. Commentaries on grammatical works, such as  
Cenavaraiyar's commentary on Tolkappiyam
  - b. Commentaries on literary works, such as  
Adiyarkku Nallar's commentary on Silappadikaram
6. Grammatical Works :
  - a. Treatises like Nannul, Viracholiyam
  - b. Treatises like Akapparul Vilakkam, Purapporul  
Venpamalai, Iraiyanar Akapporul urai
  - c. Nikantus
7. Philosophical Works :
  1. Poetry form : Meykanta Sattiram
  2. Prose form : Perya Achan Pillai's commentary

The usual objections raised against basing any history primarily on early medieval Tamil Literature are threefold.

1. The literature is largely idealistic; further the Tamil grammarians had long ago stereotyped the laws of composition and conventionalised for all times the subject, method and style of Tamil literature. 2. Most of the works are mere translations from Sanskrit. 3. Most of them are non-secular in character. A depth analysis of Tamil literature will reveal that there were innovations like *Civakacintamani* (an epic in *viruttam* metre), *Kalinkattupparani*, etc. Tamil poets were experimenting afresh in genre, theme, metre, style and even in language as in the case of the hybrid *Manippiravulam*. The weight of the tradition actually never takes away the freedom of the poet but only interferes with it and restrains. One can always verify some of the findings from the literary sources with epigraphical and other sources. No Sanskrit work has been literally translated into Tamil and one could always separate the native Tamil element from the original Sanskrit ones. The third argument is met by a number of secular works, such as *Nandikalampakam*, *Muvarula*, *Kalinkattupparani*, etc. Even non-secular works, such as *Kampa Ramayanam* are, strictly speaking, not entirely religious in the sense that devotional literature is. Devotional literature would also yield interesting results. Only thing is one has to adopt new techniques.

## II

The early medieval Tamil authors came from different regions in Tamilnadu, belonged to different religious sects, castes and classes. Some poets were outside the royal patronage. The Tamil literature does not throw any light on some aspects of history.<sup>8</sup> This is because the available literature is elitist.<sup>9</sup> The purpose of literature was different. But new techniques of research are bound to throw more light on history.

When a particular fact is mentioned by more than one author or by the same author in more than one context, that is presumed to add to the validity of the point. But if this fact is contradicted by some other primary source or sources, then it will be weighed

and evaluated. Conventional expressions and borrowed ideas will be separated and carefully studied. The literary sources do not throw any light on some aspects for which there is ample evidence in inscriptions. The existence of *Brahmadeya* villages may be sighted as an example. But literary sources throw light on some areas for which there is no information in the epigraphical sources. Silence should not be considered as indicating the non-existence of a certain thing.

When using particular texts, there will be special problems. Two examples may be given. There is a 'legal fiction' adopted by the tradition of the commentators of India whereby changed conditions prevailing in their period are sought to be explained in terms of the old text on which they comment. With this clue one can write history. When for a particular text there are more commentaries than one, the different approaches of the commentators could be studied. The *Nikantus* which apparently contain only synonyms and antonyms give a useful picture of the contemporary social life. Socio-linguistic studies, study of place names, material objects, ideas, beliefs, customs, etc., may be taken up. Quantitative method may be used in some cases. Comparative study of similar works in other Indian languages should be carried out carefully. Psycho-analytic method may also be employed. Medieval Tamil Index on the model of N. Subramanian's 'Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index' should be prepared.

#### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> From c 550 A.D. to 1310 A.D. (from the accession of Simhavarma Pallava in Kanchi down to the invasions of the Muslims in the Tamil country).
- <sup>2</sup> K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, N. Subramanian and others have used this source to a limited extent.
- <sup>3</sup> Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, Penguin Books, 1973, pp. 94ff.
- <sup>4</sup> *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1970, p. 21.

- <sup>5</sup> *New Bearings in English Poetry*, Penguin Books, London, 1972, p. 23.
- <sup>6</sup> This work has been lost. More than 25 works are known only by their name. Several hymns of Devaram also have been lost.
- <sup>7</sup> The dating of Tirukkural and other minor literary texts (*Pathnen kilkkanakku*) is still a problem. But they are certainly late Sangam works.
- <sup>8</sup> E.g., The Little tradition (worship of village gods and goddesses).
- <sup>9</sup> It is not caste elitism but one that is formed by the caste called the individuals. Folk literature and literary works which are against the interests of the elite were allowed to be lost.

# KANNADA SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF TAMILNADU (MEDIEVAL PERIOD, 1336-1763)

DR. K. G. VASANTHA MADHAVA  
(*Vijaya College, Mulki, S. K.*)

## I

THE KANNADA INSCRIPTIONS and literary works ranging between 1336 and 1763 A.D. furnish important source material for the religious and political history of medieval Tamilnadu. Most of the sources are contemporary. A critical study of these sources reveals that most of the facts mentioned in the Kannada sources have confirmatory evidence. An attempt is made here to narrate these sources and assess their value for the reconstruction of the history of Tamilnadu.

The cordiality between the Tamilians and other people of the Vijayanagara empire is revealed in an epigraph from Nanjangudu in the Mysore district. The inscription is dated 1368 A.D.<sup>1</sup> It states that Kovaru and Komayuru, two prominent citizens of Togadur, witnessed the grant of Chikka Kampanna<sup>2</sup> to the temple of that village. The word Kovar stands for Tamilians.

The dispute between the Jains and the Srivaishnavas in the regions of Kanchi and Srirangam is indicated in an epigraph dated the same year. The epigraph hails from Magadi.<sup>3</sup> It records that King Bukkaraya I of Vijayanagara summoned before him representatives of the Sri Vaishnavas from eighteen *nadus* including Kanchi and Srirangam, expressed his displeasure at the unjust proceedings of the Vaishnavas against the Jains and brought about reconciliation between the two sects.



General Iruguppa, who served in Tamilnadu between the years 1382 and 1387<sup>4</sup> A.D., was an ardent patron of Jainism. The Sravanabelgola inscription dated 1422 A.D.<sup>5</sup> records his devotion and services to Jainism in the different parts of the Vijayanagara empire including Tamilnadu. It is interesting to note that Iruguppa's service to Jainism in Tamilnadu is confirmed by a Tamil inscription dated 1382 A.D. It records his gift of land to Trailokyanatha basadi<sup>6</sup> at Tirupparuttekunru in the Chinglepet district.

The services of the Kumbhakona Matha<sup>7</sup> in propagating Madwaism in the years between 1541 and 1681 A.D. are revealed in four copper-plate inscriptions. It is curious to note that Sri Surendra-Tirtha, one of the Swamis of the Kumbhakona Matha gave *sanyasa diksha* to one Sri Yogendra, a Gowda Sarasvat Brahmana from Cochin, and played prominent part in founding the Kashi Matha.<sup>8</sup> One of the copper-plate inscriptions dated 1541 A.D. written in devanagari script and Kannada language mentions the visit of Sri Yogendra-Tirtha to the Kumbhakona Matha and for that the Swami of the latter Matha was pleased<sup>9</sup> (Nivu Namma Samasthanadali Bandu Namma Anugrahaikke Patraradhiri). The same epigraph continues to state that Surendra-Tirtha presented Yogendra-Tirtha one *Saligrama* for daily worship, and all paraphernalia as used in the Kumbhakona Matha for the use of the new Swami whenever he was going on travel, and gave orders permitting him to make *Mudradharanam* and *Japamantra* and to supervise and make all rules for the conduct of religious rituals of the Gowda Sarasvata community. Finally, it says that Sri Surendra-Tirtha Swamiji promised to settle any differences among the followers of Yogendra-Tirtha Swami (Nimage Yelliyadaru Vivada Bandare Navu Pareharisi Kottevu). The Rayasam issued by the Kumbhakona Swamiji is found in another copper-plate inscription dated the same year. It says that the Konkana Brahmanas residing at Cochin, Mangaluru, Barakuru, Bedburu and Bhatkal had to obey the commands to be passed by Yogendra-Tirtha and his disciples.<sup>10</sup>

A copper-plate inscription dated 1663 A.D. informs us that Sri Sudhindra-Tirtha was a Guru or Sri Raghvendra-Tirtha who received the grant of village from Dodda Devaraja Odeyar of Mysore.<sup>11</sup> Sri Raghvendra-Tirtha was the head of the Matha at Kumbhakona from 1621 to 1671 A.D.<sup>12</sup>

The dispute between Sri Yogendra and Sri Raghvendra-Tirtha of the Kumbhakona and Kashi Mathas respectively is disclosed in a copper-plate inscription in devanagari script and Kannada language. This inscription is preserved in the Kerala State Archives, Ernakulam. It belongs to the year 1681 A.D.<sup>13</sup> On the basis of these epigraphs the genealogy of the Swamis of the Kumbhakona Matha is drawn as follows :

Srimad Jitamitravarya-Tirtha.

Srimad Raghunada-Tirtha.

Srimad Surendra-Tirtha 1541-1571.

Srimad Sudhindra-Tirtha 1571-1621.

Srimad Raghvendra-Tirtha 1621-1671.

Srimad Yogendra-Tirtha 1671-1681.

One Timmappa Nayaka's rule in Coimbatore and his devotion to Virasaivism are brought to light in an epigraph dated 1563 A.D. The inscription is found in the Mari Cuddi of Chhadakavadi Hobali of Chamaraja Taluka of the Mysore district. It records that Timmappa Nayaka of Kovuttur (Coimbatore) granted a village, Baggavadi, with all rights to one Mahadevaru, a head of Virasaiva Matha named Upparige Matha. The grant was made for the merit of the deceased parents of the chief.<sup>14</sup>

## II

Regarding the political history of Tamilnadu we have both epigraphical and literary sources. The successful military campaigns of Krishnadevaraya and Achyutaraya in Tamilnadu are recorded in two inscriptions dated 1512 A.D. and 1534 A.D. respectively.<sup>15</sup> An epigraph found at Melkote is worthy to be noticed here. It brings to light the existence of the Chola chief, Munurolu Chennadeva.

The chief is said to have made grant to a temple at Singodatti village which emperor Sadasivaraya of Vijayanagara had favoured to him for Amaramagane. The epigraph is dated 1550 A.D.<sup>16</sup> In the light of this source, it is surmised that the Chola chief of the epigraph had some sort of connection with the imperial Cholas of Tamilnadu.

The relations between the chiefs of Tamilnadu and Mysore are highlighted in a few inscriptions. Further, these inscriptions generally mention the victorious military expeditions of the Mysore rulers like Devaraja (1659-1672 A.D.) and Chikkadevaraja Odeyar (1672-1704 A.D.), over the Nayakas of Madhura. For instance, an epigraph from Nanjangudu dated 1663 A.D. refers to Devaraja Odeyar as the destroyer of the Pandya king, skilful in cutting down the strongly armed Pandyas (Chanda Bahu Balodanda Pandya Khandana Pandita).<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to note that the victory of Devaraja in Tamilnadu is confirmed in a few epigraphs found in the Salem and Coimbatore districts.<sup>18</sup> Similarly two Kannada inscriptions dated 1674 A.D. state that Chikkadevaraja routed the forces of the Pandya king Chokkanatha (1659-1682 A.D.) and captured Peramatti, Mattanjatti, and Anantagiri in the kingdom of Madhura.<sup>19</sup>

The Kannada literary works, namely, *Kanthirava Narasaraaja Vijaya*, composed by Govinda Vaidya in 1648 A.D.,<sup>20</sup> *Chikkadevaraja Vamsavali*, *Chikkadevaraja Vijayam* and *Apratima Viracharitra* composed in the years 1680, 1686 and 1700 respectively by Tirumalaraya,<sup>21</sup> and the prose works of Chikkupadhyas<sup>22</sup> inform us of a few aspects of the political history of Tamilnadu after the fall of the Vijayanagara empire. These are the political changes in Tamilnadu, the emergence of the various kingdoms in different parts of that region and their hostile relation with the rulers of Mysore. Though these works exaggerate the military achievements of the Mysore rulers,<sup>23</sup> the above literary works enable us to know the military strength, the method of warfare, the war strategy and the diplomacy of the Madhura Nayakas in their confrontations with the rulers of Mysore. These may be cited by giving the following examples.

Govinda Vaidya says that Kanthirava Narasaraja (1638-1659 A.D.) encountered Madhura Tirumala Nayaka's (1623-1659 A.D.) force which had strength of four thousand cavalry, one lakh foot-soldiers and few hundred elephants in his campaign against the Sambali chiefs.<sup>24</sup> With the cavalry the Madhura Nayaka encircled the Mysore forces. But the latter gave crushing defeat to the former.<sup>25</sup> Kanthirava Narasaraja constructed separate stable at Srirangapatana where he kept captured horses and elephants of the Madhura Nayaka.<sup>26</sup>

Chokkanatha, the successor of Tirumala, is said to have possessed one lakh foot-soldiers, a few hundred elephants and several horses (Ukkalu Ondu lakham, Sökkane galondu nuru palu Kudure galim Sirkirda Balam Balisi Sökkirda Chokka).<sup>27</sup> Further, the armed forces of the Madhura Nayaka comprised Valammas, Kanmmes, Telugas, Banagigas artillery men<sup>28</sup> (Tupakadavaru). The artillery was under the command of Lingama Nayaka and Chokka installed huge cannons in the battlefield<sup>29</sup> (Piriya Firangi). He formed a military confederacy made up of the fugitive emperor Sriranga-raya of Vijayanagara, Vedoji Pundita (then Vizier of Bijapur and in charge of Gingee), and Annata Pundita.<sup>30</sup> With the support of the confederate and his own forces Chokkanatha besieged the fort of Erodu. But his forces suffered heavy casualty in the battlefield from Chikkadevaraja, then Yuvaraja of Mysore.<sup>31</sup>

Venkata I's rule in the southern portions of the Vijayanagara empire (Tamilnadu) with Chandragiri as capital, his military expedition against the Madhura Nayaka and the treacherous activities of Tirumalaraya are mentioned in the *Chikkadevaraja Vamsavali*.<sup>32</sup> It is the only work which refers to the predatory activities of the Adilshahi forces in the regions of Vellore and Chandragiri.<sup>33</sup>

Chikkupadhy, the court poet of Chikkadevaraja, also mentions the heroic achievements of the Mysore rulers in their confrontations with the Nayakas of Madhura in his prose works. His literary works have been particularly useful to us since these inform us of the existence of strong forts in the kingdom of Madhura. These forts are Paramatti, Malai, Muttamjati,

Sadamangala, Ariyaluru, Toreyuru, Anantagiri, Kunthuru, Amaduru, Akkareddi and Virodakotte.<sup>34</sup>

Nalappa's *Hyder-Nama*, written in 1784 A.D., describes the chaotic conditions of Tamilnadu in the middle of the eighteenth century and the early activities of Haidar Ali in that region. It informs us that the heroism shown by Haidar in besieging Trichinapally fort earned him the title of Bahadur.<sup>35</sup> Further, the same work states that Haidar defeated the Paleyagaras of Palani Virupaksha, Mile Mirange, and Amminayaka and amassed wealth to the extent of twenty lakhs.<sup>36</sup> Though many of the activities of Haidar have already been known, the chief value of this work consists in giving confirmatory evidence, while here and there some new materials are supplied to the historians.

The value of the Kannada sources stated above is enriched if we review them in the light of other sources.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> *Epigraphia Carnatica*, III, N 117, p. 352 (Bangalore 1896). Cited hereafter as *E.C.*
- <sup>2</sup> He was governing the region south of Mysore. He was the son of Kampanna.
- <sup>3</sup> *Mysore Archaeological Reports 1906-1911*, p. 4 (Bangalore 1973). Cited as *M.A.R.*
- <sup>4</sup> Saletore, B. A., *Medieval Jainism with reference to the Vijayanagara Empire* (Bombay 1938), p. 305.
- <sup>5</sup> *E.C.*, II, Sr. 253 ; pp. 166-168.
- <sup>6</sup> Ranjgacharya, V., *A Topographical List of Inscriptions—Madras Presidency* (Madras 1919), p. 375.
- <sup>7</sup> Sri Vibuvendra-Tirtha founded the Kumbhakona Matha on account of his quarrel with his Guru Sri Ramchandra-Tirtha of the Uttaradi Matha. This Matha came into existence in the fifteenth century. The followers of this Matha were scattered in the regions of south Kanara and Malabar. See *The Message*, The Commemoration Volume, published by Kasli Matha (1971), p. 25.
- <sup>8</sup> *Diksh Smriti Malika* (Mulki 1961), pp. 55-56.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*



- <sup>11</sup> *M.A.R.* 1917, pp. 58-59.
  - <sup>12</sup> *Karnataka Historical Review*, V, Pt II (Dharwar 1938), p. 23
  - <sup>13</sup> *Diksha Malika*, p. 19.
  - <sup>14</sup> *M.A.R.* 1931, pp. 151f.
  - <sup>15</sup> *M.A.R.* 1930, p. 179; *E.C.*, III, Maudya 55
  - <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1906-1911, p. 24.
  - <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 1917, pp. 58-59; *E.C.*, II, N 23, Srirangapatana 14
  - <sup>18</sup> Hayavadana Rao, C, *History of Mysore* (Bangalore 1943), I, p. 230.
  - <sup>19</sup> *M.A.R.* 1906-11, p. 133; *E.C.*, V (revised 1976), Mysore 99
  - <sup>20</sup> *Kanthirava Narasuraja Vijayam* (Bangalore 1971), p. 501 Cited hereafter as *K.N.V.*
  - <sup>21</sup> R. Narasimha Achar, *Karnataka Kavi Charitra* (Bangalore 1973), II, pp. 428-433. See Hayavadana Rao, *op. cit.*, I, p. XXV.
  - <sup>22</sup> R. Narasimha Achar, *op. cit.*, p. 434.
  - <sup>23</sup> These aspects have been discussed by Hayavadana Rao and Muddachari in their works. See *History of Mysore*, I, pp. 148, 152-154, 226-230, 274 and *Mysore Maratha Relations in the 17th Century* (Mysore 1969), Chapters I and II.
  - <sup>24</sup> *K.N.V.*, XVII, Verse 40, p. 320 This principality is situated in between the kingdoms of Mysore and Madhura. The Nayaka of Madhura instigated the chief of Samballi against the Mysore ruler in 1641. See *K.N.V.*, XVII, Verse 8, p. 315.
  - <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Verses 44, 56, 57 and 62, p. 321.
  - <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, Verses 26, 29, pp. 88-89.
  - <sup>27</sup> Tirumalayangar, *Chikkadevaraja Vijayam* (Mysore 1896), Asvasa V, Verse 35, p. 107.
  - <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, Verses 40, 86, pp. 107, 114.
  - <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 81, pp. 109, 114.
  - <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, Verses 37, 40, 41.
  - <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Verses 81, 88, 90.
  - <sup>32</sup> R. Narasimha Achar, *op. cit.*, II, p. 432. L. Basavaraja, *Tirumalaraja Matha Chikkadevaraja* (Dharwar 1972), p. 6
  - <sup>33</sup> See Muddachari, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
  - <sup>34</sup> R. Narasimha Achar, *op. cit.*, p. 436.
  - <sup>35</sup> T. T. Sharma (Ed), *Charitrika Dakolegalu* (Bangalore 1971), pp. 24-32; *M.A.R.*, 1930, p. 82.
  - <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34; *M.A.R.*, 1930, p. 83.
- The activities of Haidar after 1763 mentioned in the *Hyder-Nama* are left out here since these are beyond the scope of this paper.



## *Modern Period*

# PROBLEMS IN STUDYING NEWSPAPERS AS PRIMARY SOURCE FOR THE MODERN PERIOD OF TAMILNADU HISTORY

DR. K. NAMBI AROORAN

(*Madurai University, Madurai*)

## I

"A DIRECT personal encounter with the past comes through consulting primary sources ; there the history student finds the past speaking for itself in its own language and in the light of its own concerns rather than through those of subsequent generations. Such an encounter is a very exciting experience, especially if one has already enjoyed and been stimulated by the conversations with the past that he has listened in on."<sup>1</sup> One may agree with these remarks of John Webster in measuring the degree of mental satisfaction which a research student derives from consulting primary sources. The experience is really "exciting" when one scans through the columns of daily newspapers while working on topics covering recent decades. An attempt is made in this paper to discuss some of the problems that may arise in consulting newspapers for the modern period of Tamilnadu history. These may be common to histories of other regions as well in India.

## II

Primary source material for the modern period include government records, official publications (such as parliamentary papers, census reports, annual reports, proceedings of various

government departments, district manuals and gazetteers), private papers and contemporary newspapers and periodicals. What is the relative importance of newspapers as primary source material when compared to other primary sources? How far are they reliable? Can the information found in them be accepted *in toto*? How are we to maintain objectivity? How are we to study newspapers from the point of view of methodology? What is the role of our libraries in preserving newspapers for research? These questions are raised and answered in relation to the study of two English dailies published from Madras—*The Madras Mail* and *The Hindu*—from the latter half of the nineteenth century till to-date.<sup>2</sup> A perusal of the references cited in the foot-notes of thesis published as well as unpublished, on topics relating to the first half of this century on the history of Tamilnadu from various approaches, would show the importance of these two dailies.<sup>3</sup>

None can deny the fact that newspapers supply vital information of varied nature for the research student. These may not be obtainable from any other source. For example the reporting of the various meetings of caste associations, literary circles and political clubs in Madras city as well as districts indicates the intensity of caste-consciousness, Tamil renaissance and nationalism respectively. Further the 'Letters to the Editor' columns enable us to feel the pulse of the readers on various issues. Even though such views expressed by the readers may not speak for the entire people, yet they indicate the trend of thinking and the prevalence of different points of view on certain problems. These may not be discernible from any other source.

Sometimes newspaper reporting of incidents of violence may be correctives to confidential or secret police reports often cited in the fortnightly reports of the provincial governors. Official versions of violent incidents during the national movement were often suppressed, distorted, coloured, biased and prejudiced. In certain cases it can be the other way about and the official reports may be correctives to newspaper versions.

In questioning the credibility of the newspaper information one may agree with John Webster's analysis of "three attitudes which historians have brought to their sources. Some accept them

at face value, believing everything they say ; some accept everything in them that does not conflict with their views about what is historically possible ; and some question their sources by placing them against the total environment out of which they came and then, by applying a number of critical tests to them, determine the limits of their reliability".<sup>4</sup>

An objective and impartial research student cannot have the first two attitudes as pointed above. It would be dangerous to have such attitudes particularly in studying newspapers. An objective student should develop the third attitude as explained by John Webster—particularly so while working on recent decades. The reliability of a newspaper information can be tested by a study of related and other contemporary newspapers, by checking the information with government records and by comparing with the information found in private papers of leading contemporary personalities.

It is very difficult and rare to find out a newspaper maintaining cent per cent objectivity in reporting. None can deny the fact that the views expressed in editorial columns definitely reveal one kind of bias or other, for the editors are controlled by proprietors (in some cases the proprietors themselves were editors) who have party or communal or caste or ideological leanings. Often newspapers are founded for projecting one or more of such leanings. The bias that could be felt in the editorial columns (some call them 'leading articles') may also be felt in reporting.

### III

The two English dailies—*The Madras Mail* and *The Hindu*—which a research student working on any topic relating to Tamilnadu history in the last eighty or ninety years consults would often be found to express diametrically opposite views on major political and communal issues. This may be baffling to a researcher and often leave him in a quandary. *The Madras Mail* founded by the British elite in the city was pro-British, anti-nationalist, Christian and pro-non-Brahmin since the founding of

the South Indian Liberal Federation in 1916 (which later came to be called the Justice Party). *The Hindu* established by the South Indian Hindu Tamil Brahmin English-educated elite of Madras was pro-Indian, nationalist, anti-British, pro-Brahmin and anti-non-Brahmin. Such an identification of the two dailies could be understood from a few editorial references on certain important issues relating to national as well as provincial politics during 1920's. Three illustrations are given below.

(1) Under dyarchy the first Madras Legislative Council met in February 1921 and separate seats were provided for members elected on the basis of communal and other representations.<sup>5</sup> Referring to this, *The Hindu* (Weekly edn. 17 Feb., 1921) in a leader observed : "Distinct blocks of space are allotted to Brahmins, non-Brahmins, Muham-madans, Zamindars and Depressed Classes.... One might wonder if His Excellency is holding an exhibition in South Indian social fossils." But *The Madras Mail* (15 Feb., 1921) appreciated the arrangement in a leader entitled 'A Good Beginning'.

(2) The Hindu Religious Endowment Bill was introduced by the Justice ministry in 1922 in the legislature, for the better administration of religious endowments in the Madras Presidency. A provision was made in it "for the diversion of the surplus funds of religious endowments for purposes of public utility other than those for which they were originally intended".<sup>6</sup> *The Madras Mail* (13 December, 1922) commended this provision and wrote : "A more radical aim is the diversion of surplus income to objects which, though not identical with the intentions of the donors, fulfil a charitable purpose. Amongst such objects are the establishment of hospitals and dispensaries and the foundation of schools and other institutions and works of public utility and benefit." But *The Hindu* (Weekly, 21 December, 1922) voiced "the widespread apprehension that has been roused in the Hindu community" regarding the provision as to the disposal of surplus funds and said : "Some endowments contemplate the advancement of learning ; reasonable excuse might be found

for encouraging indigenous medicine with the funds of others ; but you cannot, however much you may strain it, draw support from the *cy pres* doctrine to expend Hindu endowment funds on roads and sanitations of which other communities as well as Hindus will be equal beneficiaries.”<sup>7</sup>

(3) From the beginning of the Hindi Movement in South India in the 1920's, the one point on which sharp differences began to arise was whether the study of Hindi should be compulsory or optional. Sir T. Vijayaraghavachariar, a member of the Public Services Commission, Government of India, speaking at Madras observed that both from the practical and academic point of view the introduction of Hindi as a compulsory second language in schools and colleges would be of benefit to the community at large.<sup>8</sup> Supporting the views of Vijayaraghavachariar, *The Hindu* (Weekly, 16 August, 1928) wrote that “his views, which are based upon mature experiences of conditions both in India and abroad, are entitled to considerable weight”. But *The Madras Mail* (9 August, 1928), in an editorial entitled ‘Hindi's Advance’, questioned thus : “But does he (Sir T. Vijayaraghavachariar) then propose that Tamil or Telugu should be cut out altogether ? Or does he propose that the average educated person should be trilingual ? Probably this is the best course, but is it practical ? . . . . If there had to be a choice which of the languages of India was to be recognised as the national language Hindi would be the only contestant with a hope of success . . . but it can never take the place of English as a medium of international communication.”

From the above three illustrations it could be seen how diametrically opposite views could be gathered from the newspapers on one and the same problem. The research student will be puzzled and will be in a dilemma as to which version he should rely upon if he studies more than one newspaper. If he studies only one newspaper he may be committing the mistake of arriving at his conclusions on the view-points expressed in that particular daily. Therefore a research student working on a topic covering the recent decades may have to study as many dailies as are



available, to arrive at the truth. In case he is not able to arrive at a definite conclusion on certain issues, he may just cite the different viewpoints and leave them for the reader to judge.

#### IV

To conclude the author would like to share a few ideas in tackling problems relating to methodology in collecting materials from newspapers.<sup>9</sup> In citing newspapers one has to be very meticulous in noting down the date, month and year of the daily. While taking notes on slips or cards this vital information should be noted down first. Failure to do so would result in wasting time in reading through several days or months or even years again to find out the date of the reference noted down. In citing the date the following model may be adopted :

*The Hindu*, 11 Oct. 1917.

*The Madras Mail*, 4 Nov. 1925.

The date and the year can be given in numerals and the month in between in abbreviated form (with the exception of May, June and July—for others : Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.). Using numerals for months also may lead to too many numbers being used with every possibility of errors creeping in while typing or printing as given below :

*The Hindu*, 11.10.1917

*The Madras Mail*, 4.11.1925

Further in some of the Western countries people have the habit of indicating the month first in numerals, followed by the date and the year. In such places the numerals may entirely lead to a wrong reference. For example, the above references may mean

*The Hindu*, November 10, 1917.

*The Madras Mail*, April 11, 1925.

Therefore it may be better to follow the first model suggested above.

Some readers may cite the page number and column number also. But this is not very essential. Given a particular date it may not be very difficult to find out the reference quoted.



Nowadays most of the leading dailies simultaneously print copies from different centres through facsimile printing process and also speedily circulate them by air. But twenty or thirty years ago when these modern facilities were not available the newspapers were printed at one point and sent to the districts by rail or road. So they brought out 'dak' editions. In such 'dak' editions, 'late news' found in City editions may be found reported in the next day's issue. Therefore when a student refers to the newspapers preserved in the libraries he should find out whether he uses the (Madras) City edition or dak edition. There may be variation in date in the reporting of some news items.

It will be a boon to research scholars if the leading national dailies compile a quarterly index. In the absence of an index one has to spend hours together to get at a single reference. Here also certain methods could be adopted to locate the date of a reference quickly. From other sources it may be possible to know the year (or even the month) of a particular incident and from that clue the search for newspaper reference could be minimised. For example, it is generally known that the Congress ministries in various provinces resigned soon after the outbreak of the Second World War in protest against the Viceroy's act of declaring India a belligerent country without consulting either Central Legislature or the Provincial Governments. This happened immediately after the outbreak of the war in September, 1939. From this it can be inferred that the news and editorials relating to the resignation of the Congress ministry led by C. Rajagopalachari in Madras Presidency could be gathered from the Madras dailes of September-October, 1939.

In the absence of indices for the leading national dailes the author feels that local research organisations and university departments can at least compile an index of the editorials for reference. Those research students who peruse the newspapers for their topic may incidentally note down the editorial titles and help fellow-scholars.

Usually editorials are written expressing views on current events and problems—local, national as well as international. Therefore from an index of editorials it may be possible to locate

an event or incident and thereby minimise the search.

As far as the author knows there is hardly any library in Tamilnadu preserving vernacular newspapers, such as *Swadesamitran* (founded in 1882) which have played an important role in bringing about the Tamil Renaissance and national consciousness during the freedom struggle. It is possible that some individuals may have preserved some of the issues of vernacular newspapers.<sup>10</sup> Organisations, such as the Indian Historical Records Commission can make microfilm copies and supply to libraries. Certain mechanical aids, such as photocopying will be immensely helpful to a research student, particularly when he has to copy long editorials or extracts of news items.

#### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> John C. B. Webster, *An Introduction to History* (Macmillan, 1977), p. 65.
- <sup>2</sup> The *Madras Mail* was started in Madras by Europeans in 1869, while *The Hindu* was founded by G. Subramania Iyer and two others in 1878. The *Madras Mail* was renamed as *Mail* from 28 May, 1939.
- <sup>3</sup> Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India* (Oxford, 1969).  
C. J. Baker, *The Politics of South India 1920-1937* (Vikas, 1976).  
C. J. Baker and D. A. Washbrook, *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change 1880-1940* (Macmillan, 1975).  
David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamilnad, Nationalist Politics in South India 1919-1937* (New Delhi, 1977).  
K. Nambi Arooran, *The Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism 1905-1944*, unpublished thesis, University of London, 1976.
- <sup>4</sup> John C. B. Webster, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
- <sup>5</sup> The caste breakdown of the Council was as follows : 65 non-Brahmin Hindus, 22 Brahmins, 5 Muslims, 14 Indian Christians and 5 depressed classes.  
E. F. Irschick, *op. cit.*, p. 178.
- <sup>6</sup> Government of Madras, Law (Legislative) Dept., G. 0 272, 5 Dec. 1922.
- <sup>7</sup> The principle of applying the money to some object as near as possible to the one specified, is called the doctrine of cypres in English law. *Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary* (London, 1956), p. 262.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Hindu* (W), 16 Aug. 1928.  
The first language compulsory in schools and colleges then was English

and the second language which was also compulsory was usually a vernacular or a classical language.

- <sup>9</sup> The author studied forty years' *Mail* and *The Hindu* preserved at the British Museum Newspaper Library at Colindale and the India Office Library Newspaper Branch at Bush House, Strand, London.
- <sup>10</sup> For example, Professor E. F. Irschick, University of California, Berkeley, has microfilmed *Kutiyaracu* (1929-44) published by E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, the founder-leader of the Dravida Kazhagam, and willingly made copies of it at a nominal cost when the author requested for the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

# BARAMAHAL RECORDS : DOCUMENTS ON THE FACTORS IMPEDING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN INTERIOR TAMILNADU BEFORE A.D. 1800

NIKHILES GUHA  
(Kalyani University)

## I

THE NAME 'Baramahal' is used to denote the tablelands of interior Tamilnadu, a bit to the north-west in direction. Geographically they comprise a distinct unit by themselves, straddling as they do, the region where the Western Ghats run to meet the ranges from the east. The Nilgiris lie to the north-west of this region and the Anamalis form the boundary to the south. The average altitude of this area is 900 feet above the sea-level, though at places like Pollachi and Coimbatore the heights run up to 1400 feet or more. The total area included within the Baramahal is about 7,500 square miles. It encompasses not only most of the present district of Coimbatore but also includes parts of Salem, Madurai and Tiruchirapalli. At the close of the seventeenth century the district was a part of the Nayak Kingdom of Madura from whom it passed into the hands of Mysore, in about 1730. The English gained possession of the area by the Treaty of Seringapatam in 1792. Though the Baramahal thus came under their rule at a date later than most other parts of the Carnatic, it was to be the stage for one of the most important revenue experiments during the Company's rule in India—the ryotwari system. This was the result of the labours of Alexander Read appointed as Superintendent and Collector of these territories in 1792 with Captains Munro, Graham and Macleod to assist him by their charge of the southern, central and northern divisions respectively. Read

performed this duty till the outbreak of the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War in 1799 when he left, never to return.

The Baramahal Records document the activities of the English revenue officials in the region from 1792 to 1799. They are selections from the original manuscripts, published by the Madras Record Office between 1907 and 1933. Though the series was originally planned to be completed in twenty-two parts, not all were published and there are gaps in the series. In fact, not more than twelve have been brought out. But, even then their importance cannot be minimised in any way. They offer a detailed picture of the conditions of a pre-British polity immediately before the imposition of British rule. It is perhaps, however, a reflection of the relative neglect of the study of the transitional process from pre-British to British administration, particularly in the case of South India, that the contents of these records have not been held up to detailed scrutiny for long. Thus, though scholars like N. K. Sinha and Nilmani Mukherjee have utilised these records for their work on *Haidar Ali* (Calcutta, 2nd edition, 1949) and *The Ryotwari System in Madras, 1792-1827* (Calcutta, 1962) respectively, we have only one book-length study of the area in pre-British times. *The Kongu Country being the history of the modern districts of Coimbatore and Salem from the earliest times to the coming of the British* by M. Arokiaswami (University of Madras, 1956). The work is, however, sweeping in nature and provides an overall view of regional development, without entering at length into any particular aspect of a problem. Much importance attaches in this connection to some recent articles on Kongunadu (as this portion of Tamilnadu is also called) by Brian Murton, Professor of Geography at the University of Hawaii.<sup>1</sup> But, his discussions are mainly concerned with human utilisation of physical resources, leaving much room for enquiries into the economic conditions of the region as a whole. In the present article we seek to focus only on some documents in which the British officials in the Baramahal expressed their opinions on the causes of the economic backwardness of the area as they found it towards the close of the eighteenth century.

## II

Let us begin with Section 1 (Management), pages 140-152 of the published series containing Alexander Read's 'Sketch of revenue management in countries north of the Caveri under the Gentu, the Moorish and the Hon'ble Company's Government' dated 15 November, 1792. For our purpose, we may note the state of affairs from the time when Haidar seized power. The country had been then left confused, defenceless and weak by repeated Maratha invasions, on the one hand, and lack of leadership, on the other. To restore credibility to the government, he had first to devote himself to the financial problem. To the king and the Dalavai were allotted Rupees three lakhs each for their household expenses. One-tenth of the landed property was sold (*Krayagong*) against bills issued under the royal seal to purchase terms of peace against the Marathas in 1760. By his conquests Haidar had inscreased the physical extent of Mysore from 84 *Gulies* (districts) to 144. The whole area was divided into 16 subadaries of very unequal extent. Most of the former officials, being discarded and their records considered undependable, a gross estimate of the revenue raised during the previous five years was first prepared. Revenue assignments were given to the highest bidders. The subadars had full powers, military and civil, to direct the affairs of their respective provinces. In every district they were assisted by an amil and subadar. A subadar could not increase his percentage of profit in the collection of revenue during a favourable season, since it was understood that he would not be able to pay his dues fully if the crop failed. Haidar, thus, sought to limit a subadar's share of collection in any season.

Pressure from the top, however, passed in successive stages to the lowest level. The subadars maintained two sets of records, a public one (*jumma*) and a private one (*Khassgut*), valued at one-tenth of the former. The *Khassgut* was first made so that a subadar could always know of the defalcations in payment and enter them into his *jumma*. At the end of the year, he submitted his accounts, which were compared with those presented by the



Revenue Realised by Haidar Ali  
(In terms of Cantetoy Pagodas)

A.D.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
	Sirkar beriz or settlement	Subadars beriz or total collection	Sibbandi or expense of collec- tion	Sirkar pawaty or re- mitt- ances	Pawaty of subsequent demands	Total pawaty or remit- ances and demands	Total pawaty and sibbandi	Baki or total balance	Dust baki peculated by amildars	Sist baki or patel balance
1,760	100,000	106,000	10,000	90,000	....	90,000	100,000	6,000	5,000	1,000
1,761	106,000	111,000	10,600	94,000	1,500	95,500	106,100	4,900	4,000	900
1,762	106,000	112,000	10,600	94,000	2,000	96,000	106,600	5,400	4,000	1,400
1,763	106,000	112,000	10,600	94,000	2,000	96,000	106,600	5,400	4,000	1,400
1,764	112,000	115,000	11,200	97,000	2,000	99,000	110,200	4,800	3,000	1,800
1,765	112,000	112,000	11,200	94,000	2,000	96,000	107,200	4,800	2,000	2,800
1,766	112,000	112,000	10,000	80,000	....	80,000	90,000	10,000	10,000	2,000
1,767	....	100,000	10,000	80,000	5,000	85,000	95,000	5,000	5,000	....
1,768	....	70,000	10,000	50,000	....	50,000	60,000	10,000	10,000	....
1,769	....	70,000	10,000	50,000	5,000	55,000	65,000	5,000	5,000	....
1,770	....	70,000	10,000	50,000	....	50,000	60,000	10,000	10,000	....

Revenue Realised by Haidar Ali (contd.)  
(In terms of Canteroy Pagodas)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Sirkar beriz or settlement total collection of	Subadars beriz or total collection of	Sibbandi or expense of collec- tion	Sirkar pawaty or re- mitt- ances	Pawaty of subsequent demands	Total pawaty or remit- tances and demands	Total pawaty and sibbandi	Baki or total balance	Dust baki peculated by amil-dars	Sist baki or patel balance
A.D.									
1,771	90,000	94,000	9,000	81,000	3,000	84,000	93,000	1,000	...
1,772	90,000	97,000	9,000	80,000	3,000	83,000	92,000	5,000	500
1,773	90,000	97,000	9,000	79,000	3,000	82,000	91,000	6,000	1,000
1,774	90,000	98,000	9,000	78,000	3,000	81,000	90,000	8,000	1,000
1,775	95,000	100,000	9,000	77,000	6,000	83,300	92,000	8,000	1,300
1,776	95,000	107,600	9,500	80,000	7,600	87,600	97,100	10,100	4,500
1,777	95,000	109,200	9,500	79,000	9,200	88,200	97,700	11,500	4,200
1,778	95,000	110,000	9,500	78,500	8,800	87,300	97,800	12,200	5,000
1,779	95,000	111,000	9,500	77,500	9,760	87,260	96,760	14,240	4,800
1,780	100,000	115,600	10,000	84,000	19,000	103,000	113,000	2,600	2,600

sheristadar. In practice, however, the latter usually copied out his figures from what had been earlier prepared by the subadar. All parties to the profit shared the gains between them and prevented any other information from reaching Haidar's ears. These speculations were carried on for a long time with impunity, because the accounts classified as *sagvally* (i.e., register of ryot's ploughs at work) and *hattavally* (i.e., register of actual produce), which with the *Jamma wasul baki* (account of the settlements, receipts and disbursements) might have provided the means of detecting the actual state of affairs, were never examined. Districts being assessed at 15%-20% more than before, the ryots fell into great arrears and had no other means of collecting the money than take loans from the *soucars* (money-lenders). The latter, in turn issued *teeps* or bills of exchange, which the amildars could make good at Seringapatam. The profits of the sources were 3% as *mannuwurty* (premium), 3% as *nanawutta* (allowance of deficiencies on light coins) and 2% interest per month. Thus the loan was 8% for one month, 12% for three, 18% for six and 30% per annum. About half the revenue from collectors reached Seringapatam in this manner. This resulted in a considerable loss both to the government and the ryots. To assist them in their work, the subadars rented villages to the highest bidders. Rivalship among the patels or village heads raised the *razeraram* or governmental share of the produce to about a quarter of what it was before, so that the burden fell chiefly on the small peasants and could only be increased till they were forced by oppression and inability to quit their ploughs,—an unfortunate occurrence also to be met in various parts of Mughal India.<sup>2</sup> The *sibbandi* or collection costs of revenue were increased to about 10% of the total collection, i.e., an enhancement of 27% on the previous administration. The subadar's *atvani* or percentage on the revenue collected was almost doubled and the *kandachars* or militia peons were granted monthly pay in addition to their service lands.

In quantitative terms, the above statements may be represented by means of the preceding table. The basic trends may be assessed as follows. The amount remitted at Seringapatam was always less than the assessment made, though, on the other hand,

the collections far exceeded the stipulated sum due to an illegal increase of the *teerwa* (money rent) and *warum* (government's share of the rent) above the rates which had been maintained uniformly to that date. Thus, though the *beriz* showed an increase of 6% for the first three years as compared with the settlement of 1760, collections showed a steady rise on account of two factors. First, Haidar ensured the elimination of wastage due to lawlessness and disorder. Secondly, the extent of land in rent under the patels showed an increase. Some of them became too ambitious to be satisfied with single villages and rented whole *nads* or *hublies* (i.e., divisions of districts) by which they became rich because the inferior patels could conceal nothing from them while they deceived the amildars. Haidar himself was not in a position to devote attention to revenue administration, being engaged in war against the Marathas.

In 1764 amildars and sheristadars were called to Nagar as Haidar for the first time found an opportunity to enquire into the condition of his accounts. Collusion between the revenue officials and their submission of only the *jama-wasal-baki*, or settlement receipts and disbursements, prevented an accurate knowledge of affairs. Yet even the insufficient knowledge yielded by the documents and the reports of the pattiwaris afforded sufficient indications for Haidar to enable him to raise the *beriz* to 112,000. But war broke out again, first with the Marathas and then with the English.

It was not possible, therefore, to examine the accounts of the amildars or enter into fresh stipulations with them. Also, because the size of the subadaris was reduced, they were left in charge of their individual districts with few checks upon them. The importance of the subadars declined gradually in matters of revenue collections. Taking advantage of the confusion in the situation, the amildars profited greatly, remitting only what they pleased. For the year 1769, Haidar made the *devastanum* or church lands contribute half of their produce to defray the cost of war. The first decade of his administration concluded with the termination of the First Anglo-Mysore War.

## III

In 1771 Haidar summoned all his amildars to Seringapatam. In view of the ravages caused by war, the *beriz* was reduced to 90,000. Three years later he secured from the new Peshwa, Raghunath Rao, a promise to have the Maratha-occupied areas of his dominions in the Krishna-Tungabhadra region restored to him. Within four years he consolidated his hold over the region. Enquiries were made into the functions as well as immunities and benefits enjoyed by the zemindars. Inams were the only privileges they were allowed to retain and their role as intermediate renters was ruled out.

In 1776 Purnaiya, the principal financier during the later years of Haidar, advised him to ascertain the condition of his finances more thoroughly. Officials of the revenue department, up to the level of patels and village karnams, were summoned to Seringapatam. For the first time since gaining power, Haidar had the figures of the *jama-wasal-baki* compared with those of the *sagvally* and *hattavally*; the results went into the making of a *kham wasul* or exact statement of conditions in each village. Various interests and the corruption of the revenue officials, however, prevented the scheme from being worked out with accuracy. The patels and karnams concealed as much as possible by false accounts, and the amildars did their utmost to suppress all information by bribing the sheristadars. So, although the subadars had collected a sum of 100,000 in the previous year, the *beriz* was fixed at 95,000, or 5% less than what it should have been. What the amildars and patels retained was not, however, wholly their gain. For, the amildar had to bribe a host of officials at Seringapatam to retain his office and be favoured in the auditing of his accounts. The patels, on the other hand, were deprived of much of their profits as the indebtedness of the ryots to the soucars, with all the attendant charges, continued to increase.

In 1780 Haidar raised the rate of settlement and brought it back to the level where he found it on assuming power, i.e., the sum of 100,000. The amils and patels continued as before to collect more, but it is not known whether Haidar expected a rise in revenue since remittances exceeded the rate of assessment.



To centralise the administration of his kingdom, particularly with a view to enforcing a blockade against the English East India Company, Tipu issued a code of revenue regulations soon after his accession. To dissuade the revenue officials from embezzlement of public money, he increased their salary. Thus the assof or civil governor of a province and his cutcherry was paid at the following rate (in terms of rupees) :

1st assof	1000
2nd "	300
6 sheristadars	2160
3 munshies	70
3 askadars or intelligencers	100
15 harkaras	100
40 poliga peons	270
100 tahsil peons	500
Sadarvarad (Maintenance cost)	100
Total	<u>4700</u>

The assof's cutcherry was thus reckoned to account for about eight per cent of the total revenue. In addition to this, the amildar's establishment consumed five or six per cent more. Thus calculated, the whole expense of revenue provincial servants and contingent charges of collection amounted, in Alexander Read's opinion in the above mentioned document, to about ten per cent on the gross land assessments and about eighteen per cent on the net revenue.

How far did the state appropriate the produce of the peasants in the time of Tipu ? A precise answer is hard to come by both because of the lack of data and their unreliable nature, when available. Tipu, it has to be remembered, presented inflated figures of revenue yield for the districts he ceded after 1793, while grossly underestimating the value of territories retained by him.

The English accounts are also speculative and contradictory on this point. Yet there is reason to view with caution the charge that Tipu was guilty of over-assessment. The figures supplied by M. H. Gopal are most instructive. For instance, the highest



collection from the ceded districts under Tipu was 19.58 lakhs of pagodas in 1787, while Munro's expected realisation from the same area in 1801 was 20.37, 549 pagodas. To give another example, the actual collection from the fifteen districts retained by Tipu was, according to Read, 14.99 lakhs in 1798; ten years earlier at a time when his administrative efficiency was at its highest the yield had been only six per cent more.<sup>3</sup>

#### IV

To institute a comparison of the conditions in the Baramahal under Tipu and the English, it is also necessary to weigh the information obtained from various sources. Thus, at the village of Pollachi in 1800 Buchanan heard: 'The farmers complain that the land is forced on them and that they are compelled to rent more than they have stock to enable them to cultivate'.<sup>4</sup>

In 1825 Sullivan as the Collector of Coimbatore regretted that the very same area which had been, in his words, "the most fertile and best cultivated district in Coimbatore" had been ruined by over-assessment under the British. No complaint had been made by the ryots nor had they brought the matter before the revenue servants. They simply migrated to villages less assessed.<sup>5</sup>

What baffled Tipu and the British administration in South India, at least in the earlier stages, was the extent of authority and influence exercised by the local officials. They worked, as Frykenberg states, like white ants on a wooden structure, making a 'hollow mockery' of the administrative framework. Referring to Dykes whose manual of the Salem district was published in the mid-nineteenth century, Frykenberg observes what we have already noticed with regard to Pollachi; that is the desasthas or Maratha Brahmins of the inland regions found as many ways of satisfying their avarice under the British as under Tipu.<sup>6</sup>

In his later days, Tipu tried to destroy this Brahmin stronghold by appointing Muslims to the office of amildars. He also dispensed with the services of the two hircarrahs or intelligencers attached to every taluk who, we have seen, carried tales both true and false to the central administration at Seringapatam. The

following facts supplied by M. H. Gopal may also be taken to be illustrative :

'of the diwans or provincial revenue heads in 1192 only one was a Hindu. Of 65 asofs and deputy asofs in 1797-98 not one was a non-Muslim and almost all the principal Mutsaddies even were Muslims, while of the 26 civil and military officers captured by the British in 1792 and demanded back by Tipu, 6 only were Hindus and even they were petty clerks.'

Still, the end was not realised. Indolent by nature and ignorant of the practices of the revenue department, the Mussalman asofs tried to make good their sudden elevation by enhancing the demands. Pressure applied at the top passed to the bottom. The amildars, under various pretexts of unavoidable emergency, reported prodigious outstanding balances ; while they received, as bribes from the cultivators, a part of the deductions so made. Although the taxes actually paid by the people to government were thus much higher than they had been in the administration of Hyder, the industrious cultivator was by no means in as good a condition as previously.

There was no tendency to accumulate savings on the part of either the wealthier Hindus or Muslims, as nobody was sure of holding on to his substance. The Muslims spent the money that reached them immediately on dress, equipage and amusement. The Brahmin revenue officials dallied in the company of dancing girls, when not bestowing gifts on the avowedly holy. At the same time, they felt no compunction in depriving the people under them of their dues. The Sultan, for instance, had arranged that labourers on public works receive wages adequate for the work done. In reality, however, they got not more than a pittance as that was what the superintendents allowed, the remainder being appropriated. The distance of the Sultan from the scene of everyday activities gave courage to such offenders.

Tipu himself was full of sympathies when approached by an aggrieved subject but in dealing with such a case Mir Sadik, the chief dewan, did no better than imprison the distressed, while recovering the money from the officer in question. Criminal

prosecution was started against any ryot, suspected to be rich, on the most slender grounds and nothing but a bribe could save him. Cultivators, therefore, tended to neglect their work, while increasing the area under tillage ; for even by producing more with greater labour on a smaller plot, they would have to pay an equal, if not enhanced rate of assessment. The valuator of land at the time of survey also fixed his estimate on the assumption that the ryots would take much more land than their stock could fully cultivate.<sup>8</sup> Explaining the reasons behind the cheapness of land in Salem, Munro enumerated the following :

‘It is occasioned by the manners of the farmers, whom a long experience of the violence of their rulers has made distrustful, and who therefore either squander or buy their gains, instead of employing them in the cultivation and improvement of their lands. It is occasioned by the high interest of money, which induces those who have it, to employ it in other channels which they think safer than farming. It is occasioned by the want of confidence in Government, which deters those who might be disposed to lay out their money in improving land from doing so, from the apprehension that rent may be raised and it is occasioned by the great tracts of arable land which, for want of cultivation, remain in the hands of Government, ready to be given to whoever will take them’.<sup>9</sup>

Brahmins also exploited the respect they enjoyed as the ritually dominant caste to evade the instructions about the resumption of rent-free tenures whether in individual possession or existing as aghaharams. In neither case were the state’s claims thoroughly pressed. Aghaharams paid an annual fee to the amildar and sheristadar and made sure that in future they did not have to pay more than this amount. The result, as Munro said, was that all the property of the aghaharams passed in course of time into the hands of revenue officials, like shanbogues and sheristadars.<sup>10</sup>

For all his efforts to bring local officials under state control, Tipu did not succeed more than the British administrators, at least in the early stages of their administration in South India, in reaching his goal. Too much should not be made of these

differences in religious terms—a Muslim Sultan arrayed against his Hindu subordinates; for Tipu did not only extend support to the Sringeri Math after it had been partly destroyed by Parashuram Bhao, he also bestowed *inams* on the Brahmins of the Malabar coast and retained the support of prominent Hindu officials like Purnaiya. On the other hand, the privileges of the Brahmin revenue officials were not eliminated even after the imposition of the Company's rule, so much so that Frykenberg is led to observe as follows :

'Inferences drawn from contents of specific local regulations and from Munro's private papers, however hazardingly one might draw them, seem to show that Munro made a personal *inamdari settlement* with the leaders of each village, that he confirmed them in their land holdings and positions of power; and that, thereby, he recognized *inams* as the perquisites of hereditary privilege. In short, his *inamdari settlements* became the obverse, silent, or dark side of the overall constitutional structure of the political system'.<sup>12</sup>

## V

Read's Statement of the causes of defalcations of rent in Baramahal and Salem fasli 1205 (1795 A.D.)' gives or, complete list of the factors affecting revenue collection in the section entitled 'Balances' (part XV of the Baramahal Records appended below, pp. 27-28).

### 1ST. THE SEASONS

1. The loss of a crop from the want of a shower to bring it up, and the ryots having no money to purchase more seed.

2. The loss of crops from the seed rotting in the ground by reason of a heavy fall of rain, and a similar inability in the farmer.

3. The loss of whole crops when ripe that have been lain by incessant and heavy rains, when they also rot.

4. Excessive rain for a season, which causes abundance of

the crops and consequent cheapness of grain, when the amount of the whole produce may not be equal to the ground rent.

5. Excessive drought for a season which causes a vast reduction in the quantity of the crops, as though they are consequently enhanced in the price, they bring inadequate returns to the farmer.

6. Eclipses, which blight certain crops, but more particularly affect plantations of sugarcane, and fruit-trees.

## 2ND. SITUATIONS

7. Unhealthy or supposed to be the home of some malignant demon.

8. The want of the requisite proportion of wet lands to dry, when the ryots and their cattle cannot find sufficient employments during some months of the year.

9. The loss of ground or productive trees by the depredations of a river.

10. The loss of ground assessed in the bed of a tank, occasioned by its being enlarged.

11. The breaking down of tanks of the ground below them being consequently left uncultivated.

12. The cheapness of land which obliges the farmer to reduce the terms of his cowle below the survey or standard assessment when of course he must pay more than he receives for it.

## 3RD. CASUALTIES

13. Decay of bodily strength, sickness, and death in the family.

14. Disorders among cattle.

15. Destruction of the crops by vermine.

16. Losses of inhabitants and cattle by tigers.

17. Robberies.

18. Want of labourers.

19. The letting out lands to farmers who never cultivate them or who sometimes abscond.

## 4TH RYOTS IN GENERAL

20. The missing an opportunity of cultivating their lands upon a fall of rain in the proper season.

21. Their cultivating more dry lands than they have a sufficient number of hands or cattle for, by which they either have scanty crops or lose the whole.

22. Their cultivating more wet lands than they have a sufficient quantity of water for in the expectation of more and their consequently having poor crops or losing the whole.

23. Disputes about payment of certain taxes.

24. Dishonesty in not paying up their kists when in their power.

25. Extravagance by which they run into debts.

26. Poverty or inability to procure labourers or cattle or to pay up their rents.

27. Absence from their farms to elude their creditors by which they suffer.

28. Absence of tenants, and consequent delays in their payments.

29. Dissensions on account of quarrels, caprice, superstition, idleness, poverty, debts.

## 5TH. PATELS AND KARNAMS

30. Their withholding the rent of their own farms which they commonly do when they can.

31. Their detention of their collections from the other farmers, by non-remittance to the district treasury.

32. Their unnecessarily suffering the other farmers to fall into arrears, by not requiring them to pay up their kists, upon settling of the produce, and before they have time to squander away their money.

33. The fining them on various pretences, which they can often do with impunity.

34. Their cheating the other ryots in the exchange.

35. Their levying private contributions of them in money or grain to defray the expense of their marriages and festivals, or on the plea of village expenses, their bearing the expenses



while attending the cutcherry and the making presents to servants of the cutcherry to obtain favour in their assessments or collections.

#### 6TH. TAHSILDARS

36. Their detention of, or not bringing the collections regularly to account.

37. Their unnecessarily suffering the patels or collectors of village rents, to fall in arrears and not ascertaining whether their failures are owing to the withholding their collections, and their not paying up the rents of their tenants.

38. Their cheating the village collectors by the exchange, and withholding receipts from them.

39. Their fining them heavier than necessary for delays in payment.

40. Their levying private contributions of the patels and other ryots in money or grain, on pretence of loan, to defray the expense of marriages or ceremonies, and various other purposes.

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> See specially the following articles by Brian Murton :

(a) 'Key People in the Countryside : Decision makers in Interior Tamilnadu in the late Eighteenth Century', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* (New Delhi), Vol. X, No. 2, June 1973.

(b) 'Land And Class : Cultural, Social and Biophysical Integration in Interior Tamilnadu in the Late Eighteenth Century' in Robert Eric Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Tenure and Peasant in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1977).

(c) 'The Evolution of the Settlement Structure in Northern Kongu to A.D. 1800' in Brenda Beck (ed.), *Perspectives in a Regional Culture : Essays About the Coimbatore Area of South India* (New Delhi, 1979). Brenda Beck, *Peasant Society in Konku* (Vancouver, 1972) contains the most detailed bibliography of studies on this region.

<sup>2</sup> Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughul India, 1556-1707* (Aligarh Muslim University, 1963), pp. 324-329.

<sup>3</sup> M. H. Gopal, *Tipu Sultan's Mysore* (Bombay, 1971), pp. 67, 74.

<sup>4</sup> Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras Through Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Vol. II (London, 1807), p. 319.

- <sup>5</sup> Sullivan's Report of 1825 cited in R. Ratnam, *Agricultural Development in Madras State prior to 1900* (Madras, 1966), p. 78.
- <sup>6</sup> Frykenberg, *Guntur District, 1788-1848: A History of Local Influence and Central Authority in South India* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 231-236.
- <sup>7</sup> Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
- <sup>8</sup> Buchanan, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 231, 236.
- <sup>9</sup> Sir Alexander Arbuthnot (ed.), *Major General Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras: Selections from his Minutes and other Official Writings* (Madras, 1886), pp. 13, 15, 16, 31, 44.
- <sup>10</sup> Report of Kolar District in *Baramahal Records*, Sec. I, No. III, p. 4 ; also Macleod to Read, 23 May 1794, Sec. V, p. 32, and Munro to Read, 25 May, 1794, *ibid.*, p. 52.
- <sup>11</sup> Surendranath Sen, 'The Shringeri Letters of Tipu Sultan' in *Studies in Indian History* (University of Calcutta, 1930), pp. 155-169. See also the list of 'Rent-free land donated by Tipu Sultan to the Temples, Mosques and Religious Institutions of Malabar and Cochin' in C. K. Kareem, *Kerala Under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan* (Cochin, 1973), pp. 220-229, and A. Subbaraya Chetty 'New Light on Tipu Sultan' in the *Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society* (Rajahmundry), Vol. VI, July 1931, pp. 49-50 ; Vol. VIII, July 1933, pp. 15-24.
- <sup>12</sup> Frykenberg, 'The Silent Settlement in South India, 1793-1853', an analysis of the Role of Inams in the Rise of the Indian Imperial System in Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Tenure and Peasant in South Asia*, p. 48.

# SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF TAMILNADU (RECORDS IN PRIVATE CUSTODY)

DR. S. KADHIRVEL  
*(University of Madras)*

## I

IN THIS AGE of increasing historical research fresh sources have a major role to play. There are a few known sources like the Sangam Literature, inscriptions; copper-plates, etc., of the royal houses published by the Governments, that serve as the basis for the history of Tamilnadu pertaining to the ancient and medieval periods. The Madras Archival Records are the mainstay to the students of modern history of Tamilnadu. Apart from these sources there are quite a few sources which have direct bearing on the subject. These are in private custody. The aim of this paper is to make a critical assessment of such material.

Most of these are useful for the modern period, though some of them may take us back to the medieval too. Besides political history, the traditions embodied in these sources are very important for the social history of Tamilnadu. Records on the later Pandyas, the Vijayanagar empire, the Portuguese interaction in Tamilnadu, the Dutch participation and the Danish intercourse are found in the private possession of institutions and individuals all over Tamilnadu. The Archives of the Rajas of Ramnad, Sivaganga and Singampatti are storehouses of such records, not to speak of the Saraswathi Mahal Library at Tanjore.

Another major and very important place where we find

abundant historical material is the Jesuit Archives at Shenbaganur, Kodaikanal. The records of the Dioceses all over Tamilnadu, the Tranquebar Mission Office records at Trichirappalli and the London Mission Office records at Nagarcoil and Vellore are equally important. The Mosque at Royapettah, Madras and the Central Mosque at Trichy are places where we get records pertaining to the Muslim interaction in Tamilnadu. Hīndu temples and *muths* do not lag behind. Only very few materials are available from the Jain temples and the case of Buddhists is still discouraging.

The foregoing records, though in private custody, belong to institutions. The records of the Poligars may be added to those of the local powers like Ramnad, Sivaganga and Pudukkottai and hence considered as institutional. However, there are junks of records that are in the custody of private individuals in the form of correspondences, judicial documents, family records, personal diaries, etc. Some of these records change the course of history we know of now. Besides the quasi-historical material like the Villuppattus, Kummis and ballads are a class in themselves.

## II

The records of local powers like Ramnad and Sivaganga provide first-hand information and help reconstruct the history of the respective regions. The Revenue accounts called the 'Olugu Olais', in palm leaves available in Ramnad and Sivaganga palaces provide the revenue history of the respective states, and the relationship between the Rajas and the peasants and between the Rajas and their minor chieftains, etc., are found in these Olais. As these have been just matters of fact, narratives or official documents dealing with the land, its tenure, taxes levied, taxes actually collected, etc., these are free from the exaggerations or the bias of the laudatory inscriptions. The dependability of these Olais is further attested by S. R. Lushington, the British Collector at Ramnad.<sup>1</sup> While fixing up the revenue for certain areas Lushington has depended on these

Olais for ascertaining the revenue previously collected.\*

Correspondence between the Sethupathis<sup>3</sup> of Ramnad and the Governors of the Dutch possessions in the East furnish details about the Pearl Fishing in the east coast during the period from 1660 A.D. to 1790 A.D. Incidentally these documents deal with the exclusive rights of the Rajas of Ramnad in certain areas, and their special rights in territories claimed to have been owned by the Nayaks of Madurai and the like correspondences relating to the sharing of the Pearls help us in understanding the political turmoil clouding the southern part of the country even while the Nayaks had been firmly established in the Madurai country.<sup>4</sup> The commodities that were exported and imported are clearly catalogued with their exchange values. A few of these correspondences throw light on the administrative set-up of the Ramnad country. Letters that were exchanged to resolve controversies over trade dealings present a picture of the communities that were engaged in business and their mutual abhorrences. Appeals were made before the Nayaks of Madurai and the Rajas of Ramnad to prevent certain classes of people from trading because of their low birth. In fact, such records are the only hopes for the social history of Tamilnadu in the modern period, barring the Jesuit letters and ballads.

The 'Peranai Suit' (1901 A.D.) between the Raja of Ramnad and the State of Madras over the distribution of the waters of the Vaigai and Periyar, gives an insight into the irrigation system of the area (presently Ramnad and Mudurai districts) from the sixteenth century. Topographical information could also be derived from the connected papers of the suit.

A typed list of endowments made by several Sethupathis to the Rameswaram temple from 1608 to 1769 A.D. prepared from the copper-plates in the Ramnad Samasthan Office provides information about the Sethupathis and Rameswaram temple. There are forty-six other copper-plates dealing with the same subject, in respect of other temples in the Ramnad territory. If the usual caution is exercised in the case of other copper-plates,

these will provide a foundation for the cultural history of the region, inasmuch as they deal with the specific allotments of the endowed funds for purposes of Vedic education, poor feeding, remuneration to the temple servants, etc.

The copper-plate dated 1608, helps to fix the date of origin of the Ramnad kingdom. The generally accepted date assigned by the revered Professor R. Sathyanatha Iyer, viz., 1601-1605, has to be revised in the light of this plate.<sup>5</sup>

The Sivaganga Samasthanam office preserves 'Olugu Olais' relating to the principality. The nature and contents of these palm leaf records are akin to those of the Ramnad 'Olugu Olais'.

The 'Sivaganga Blue Books' contain copies of important state papers from 1802 A.D. to 1879 A.D. Corroborative evidences to the British documents in the Tamilnadu Archives at Madras can be obtained from these papers. They are mostly useful for the political history of the period. But information about the society is intermingled with political affairs. No motive could be attributed to the records found in this collection because they were meant for domestic consumption and hence are dependable.

Many estimates relating to various civil suits are also found at Sivaganga. These must be subjected to critical assessment before accepting them as sources. Possibilities of overstatement and underestimates are always there because such documents are produced with a spirit of competition. However, they are the only sources for social and cultural history.

In Sivaganga donative plates, thirty-two in number, are also available. A few of them speak of the people's role in the fight for independence in the nineteenth century.

Among the Poligars' records, Singampatti in Tirunelveli stands out as the best, both in quality and quantity. It is a well-maintained record office. Thousands of documents in Tamil and English are preserved here. They relate to the forest wealth of the area, revenue of the *zamin*, financial position of the neighbouring *zamins*, secret letters about the dealings with the British and the fellow zamindars, agricultural problems of



the people, communication facility provided by the administration and the extra taxes collected on that score, etc. Of course, documents relating to the origin of the Palayams are also available.

Almost all the zamindars in the state have their own official histories, mostly in palm leaves. They present the history of the Palayams from their inception. Most of such records from the former Pandya country point to the fact that they existed in some form or other right from the days of the later Pandyas, thereby negating the theory that Palayams were inventions of the Vijayanagar rulers (in Tamilnadu)<sup>6</sup> (e.g., Uthumalai, Wadagarai, Nerkkattumseval, Singampatti, Sivagiri have been in existence since the thirteenth century). The correspondences exchanged between these poligars portray the real intentions and will of the poligars and their people in their dealings with the Nawab of Arcot and the British. Consideration of caste unity, traditional enmity, economic necessities, financial commitments, etc., are found embodied in these documents.<sup>7</sup>

### III

Patronised by the Maratha kings of Tanjore, the Saraswathi Mahal Library is a store-house of Modi records in Tamilnadu. The records deal with a long period, from the time of the capture of Tanjavur by Shahji to the British take-over of the state. Information on the socio-economic history of the region for the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could also be profitably culled out from the Modi and English records preserved here. Some of the documents furnish information about the period following that of the Imperial Cholas as 'flash backs'.

Petitions from the general public on matters relating to agriculture and trade and the decisions taken on them by the administration provide insight into the state of affairs in the nineteenth century. Religious catholicity of the rulers could be gleaned from the many endowments of the Rajas to Hindu (all

sects), Muslim and Christian religious orders. Records on ship building and seaborne trade give interesting account of foreign trade.

What is more interesting is the enthusiasm evinced and encouragement given to education and culture. Bundles of palm leaf suvadis and Modi manuscripts bear testimony to these. Information about the structure of the schools, curriculum, qualification of teachers, salaries, etc., is available. Corroborative evidence can be culled out from the Chatram Records.

#### IV

The Chatram (Choultry) Records are a class by themselves. Under the Maratha Rajas of Tanjore a separate department for maintaining free schools with Choultries for the travelling public with food and shelter, free of cost, was run by the Government. Apart from the state allotments, large areas of arable lands were also gifted by individuals. It is gratifying to find a form of socialization of wealth in those days and that too through voluntary contribution. Incidentally, information about the tenancy of such lands is also available. The foregoing account is only very selective. A separate book on the records of the Saraswathi Mahal Library will not be a distant possibility.

The above mentioned records may appear in a way as governmental documents as those powers were also ruling during various periods. But these records are not available with the State Archives, where one gets all the materials on their interaction with the British. I have deliberately excluded them.

#### V

956 photostat copies of documents whose originals are kept in Rome in the form of correspondence between the Fathers of the Madurai Mission and the Procurator-General for the province of the South at Rome, are kept in the Shenbaganur Jesuit Archives. These letters date back to 1544 A.D. Though the

main theme of these letters is religious activities, they throw light on the contemporary history of the country. They give a full picture of the state of affairs of the country in the sixteenth, seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.

Besides narrating their own activities of preaching and conversion, these Fathers have recorded their observations on the social, political and economic conditions of the land in which they were preaching. Since these factors indirectly influenced their work they reported them to their superiors. Since some of the Fathers had close contacts with the courts of Tamilnad, they gave a vivid description of the Governmental machinery—taxation, revenue, administration of justice, war, etc. Most of these letters are either in Portuguese or in Spanish. French letters date from 1700 A.D. only. No English letter is available. All of them are of great historical value. To cite only a few examples here : a Portuguese letter of Fr. Balthasar Da Costa, dated 14th October 1646, deals with the Nayaks' war with their suzerain Sri Ranga III of Vijayanagar. Fr. Rossi's letter of 1748 mentions rain and rice in plenty in the Maravar country while there was utter drought in the neighbouring countries. A French letter of Fr. Barrieress, dated 4th July 1757, speaks of the war between the poligars of Periyagulam and Ammayanayaganur, which was followed by famine and plague. No letter fails to mention the cruel treatment meted out to the fathers by the Maravars and the Brahmans.

There is bound to be an element of over-statement and under-estimate of the local affairs due to a lack of proper understanding of the local cultural trends. Their comments on certain matters may even be ignored, in some modified and in certain other cases accepted too. There is definitely religious bias in most of the documents. But one has to bear in mind that religion was the basis of their very existence in India and allowance has to be given for that. Shorn of prejudices and shortcomings, these records are very useful for the reconstruction of the history of Tamilnadu.

## VI

There are few other Church documents (Catholic), the Diocese records, that do not fall under the purview of the Jesuits. They belong to the Bishopricks all over Tamilnadu. The minutes of the meetings of the Bishopricks furnish details which are useful for the reconstruction of the history of Tamilnadu. To cite a few examples :

The Coimbatore Diocesan Archives provide particulars about the people of that area and their relations with the Church from 1600 to 1775 and from 1865 to 1878. They are more or less gazetteers of Kongu country. A letter of Fr. Anne dated 1666 describes the people of the Kongu country as "innocent, honest, and hardworking with implicit obedience to their masters". This letter provides a clue to the structure of the society in 1666 A.D.

Records providing particulars about loom tax, weaving tax, etc., in 1792 and documents on the export of tobacco, betel leaf, cloths of all kinds to Palghat and cotton thread to Mysore are also available at the Coimbatore Bishopric. A chronicle in French which gives full picture of the political, economic and social conditions of the Coimbatore and Palghat regions from 1775 to 1878 is of immense value for historical research. Such records could be found in Trichirapalli, Tuticorin, Kattar,<sup>8</sup> (Nagercoil), Mylapore (Madras) and some other places. Special mention must be made of Ootty Basilica where information is available on social history of the region from 1812 onwards.<sup>9</sup>

On the eastern coast, thirteen former Portuguese Churches' records are found scattered among individuals in Veerapandian Pattinam, Alandalai, Overi, Sathangulam, Manapad and Tuticorin. These are of exceptional value for the Portuguese interaction in Tamilnadu. Corroborative evidence for the commercial information found in them could be culled out from the family records of Chavalier Roach Victoria and Chavaher Machado of Tuticorin, who deliberated with the Dutch also.<sup>10</sup>

The Danish Mission records at the Bishop's office at Trichy give insight into the foundation of European colonies in Tranquebar and the history of the port there. The relationship between the king of Tanjore and the Danish king, the list of commodities exported and imported from there and particulars about trade with Ceylon are the few important information available from the documents. It is interesting to note that some of the caste-Hindus opted for conversion for the sake of trade and in some other cases as an opposition to the domination of the Brahmins. (Most of the converts were Vellalas). Documents on the introduction of women education and industrial schools in the area are also available.

At Vellore in North Arcot district, the American Arcot Mission (C.S.I.) records, which are church reports, reflect the object of the Christian missionaries in educating the people.<sup>11</sup> Of course, the socio-economic conditions of the people with whom the missionaries had to work are also portrayed in their writings. Similar materials are available in all Protestant dioceses spread over Tamilnadu. The Baptist Registers, church books and the minutes of the church meetings provide rewarding material to the students of history.

The London Mission records in Nagercoil are of special interest since they speak of caste systems, the severity of untouchability in the former Travancore territory, the opposition shown by way of petitions, demonstrations, etc., by the Nadars and the government's inaction.<sup>12</sup>

The Mosque at Royapettah, Madras, preserves more than 1,00,000 Persian, Urdu and Arabic documents throwing light on the political, social and economic history of the Carnatic during the eighteenth century. Copies of judgments give valuable information.

Mr. K. Yasudeen, hugar of a mosque at Trichirapalli, is in possession of over a thousand documents relating to the affairs of the Nawab of Arcot roughly from 1730 to 1800 A.D. The political uncertainty in the region and the gradual ascendancy of the British are clearly noticed from the records. For most of them corroborative evidence is available in the Tamilnadu State Archives.

Islamiapuram, near Thisayanvilai in Tirunelveli district, the records of the mosque, throw much welcome light on the still undeveloped history of the Madurai Sultanate. The area is an island of Pathans still nursing the purity of blood. If these records are thoroughly studied there is a possibility of unfolding certain mysterious problems of the Madurai Sultanate.

## VII

Most of the plates and inscriptions of the temples are either published or being published. There are a number of other documents in the custody of the poligars, *muths*, communal organizations and individuals which throw light on the social, economic and cultural history of the people. Of course, political history also finds a place. If a discussion on these is launched it will be too long for an article. Therefore, a gist of such records with the subject matter they deal with is appended at the end. For the very same reasons material on National Movement is not included. Perhaps a separate article on that is warranted.

## APPENDIX

<i>Find spot</i>	<i>Name of the owner</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1. Uthumalai	Mr. N. H. M. Pandian, Zamindar	Correspondence from 1850-1869 A.D. throws light on the state of affairs.
2. Arulachi	Mr. Sempuli Valangipuli Pandian	Maravas and the East India Company.
3. Thirukurungudi	Mr. Ayyapparasa Thalaivar	A suvadi throwing light on the political conditions of Tinnevely country in the eighteenth century.



<i>Find spot</i>	<i>Name of the owner</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
4. Melandai	Mr. Vijayaragunatha Naicker	Records on social customs of Thoglavar Naicker community.
5. Srivaikuntam	Mr. Kallaperumal Pillay	History of Kuttai Pillaimars.
6. Narkattumseval	Mr. Krishna Asari	History of Puli Thevar in a Suvadi.
7. Sivakasi	Kanagian Naidu	Two Suvadis dealing with the sale of slaves in Sivakasi's territory.
8. Singampatti	Zamindar	Kudjam leaf revenue records prior to 1802 A.D. and paper records after 1802 A.D. Two bundles of petitions from the Zamin subjects and the action taken on them by the Zamindar reveal the state of affairs in the Zamindary. A letter dated 1859 from the Collector gives information about the Sepoy Mutiny.
9. Sethur	Sevagapandia Thevar	Documents on the Poligar War.
10. Alagapuri	Zamindar	-do-
11. Periyakulam	Zamindar	History of the Zamin from 1539 A.D. affairs relating to the activities of Hyder and Tippu in the Madurai area.
12. Alagaipan-diapuram	Mudaliar family	82 documents—give a clue to the history of Nanchi Nad during

<i>Find spot</i>	<i>Name of the owner</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
		seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, 800 K.A. to 906 K.A. The relations between the rulers and the ruled are clearly brought out.
13. Swamy Thope	Balakrishnan	History of Nadar community.
14. Kurunthangodu	Sivarama Nadar	-do-
15. Vaniampadi	East India Skins and Hides Merchants' Association	Papers relating to leather export from Vaniyampadi from 1650 A.D. to 1850 A.D.
16. Chellampatti	Natamai Thevar	Suvadi speaks of Kallar Society and social customs.
17. Orappanur	Mr. Thinakarasamy Thevar	Social history of the Kallars.
18. Tuticorin	Sri T. R. Venkatakrishnan	(a) Family records that furnish information about the Port of Tuticorin during the Nayak's rule; list of commodities exported and imported and the duties levied on them. (b) Particulars about the dispute between the Saivaites and Vaishnavites of Tuticorin in 1875 in Suit No. 35/14.
19. Neer Palani	Sri A. Vincent Durai	Correspondence between the Nawabs at Trichy and one Sivarama Pillay of

<i>Find spot</i>	<i>Name of the owner</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
		Neerpalani reveals the financial conditions of the Nawabs in the eighteenth century. The political situation is also incidentally noticed.
20. Neykara-patti	Sri S. K. Chinna-swamy Naicker	Family records speak of a settlement of Nayakar community from Andhra in Coimbatore area 300 years ago. They are said to have migrated in defiance of compulsory conversion to Islam.
21. Kilur	Sri A. Thisakara-swamy Thevar	Records concerning the relation of Nadu Kallans and Yusuf Khan in 1759 and the Kaval system.
22. Natagudi	Chatram Authorities	Inam register and a copper-plate issued by the Raja of Sivaganga provide particulars about Sthalam Kaval and Desa Kaval (in eighteenth century).
23. Alanthalai	Sri M. Anthoni Pitchai	Proceedings of a civil suit incidentally cite the squabbles between Madras and Paravas in 1762 for social status.
24. Lakshmi-puram	Sri Nagendran	A Ballad in Malayalam dealing with the war between the Dutch and Marthanda Varma.

[illegible]

<i>Find spot</i>	<i>Name of the owner</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
		centuries. Minute details about the village administration with Kaval as its pivot are obtained from these Suvadis. A copper-plate speaks of the inter-relationships of the various communities.
27. Appan Thirupathy	Mr. Ambalakar	Records on the irrigation system of the Nayaks.
28. Idaikattur	Catholic Church	Records furnish information as to how social inequalities helped conversion to Christianity in the seventeenth century.
29. Ooty	Fr. Padiyara	A memoir giving brief account of the History of Nilgiris from 1815—the first European settlers, coffee, and tea plantation in the hills, etc.  A note on the Todas, Badagas Kurumbar and Katasame is appended in the memoir. Besides these tribes commonly found in the Nilgiri area, mention about two more tribes, namely, the Panniers and Sholugars, exclusively found in the Cuddalore area, is also made. The Pannier tribe is peculiar and different from the Indian type. They are the descendants

<i>Find spot</i>	<i>Name of the owner</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
		of slaves brought from Africa by the Moham-medans.
		A regulation and directive issued to the Catholic priests in 1850 lay stress on Indianised preaching. Priests were instructed not to interfere with the social customs of the people lest there should be suspicion.
		A circular letter dated 29th May 1862 issued by Mjr. Codelle, Bishop of Thermopolis, refers to the observance of the caste system by the Christians. It states : "The Church has often exhorted missionaries to suppress the abuses arising from the observance of caste customs, such as contempt of low caste people but has never prescribed that caste itself should be abolished. The Government of India has never attempted to abolish the social system of castes."
30. Neykara-patti	Mr. S. K. R. Chinnaswamy Nayakar	Correspondence relating to the export of oxen to Ceylon from the Coimbatore district in 1800.



## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> S. R. Lushington, *Report on Revenue Settlement*, 1802.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> Raja of Ramnad was styled as the Sethupathi—meaning the lord of the causeway 'Sethu'—the connecting link between Rameswaram and the main land.
- <sup>4</sup> R. Sathyanatha Iyer, *History of the Nayaks of Madurai*, Madras, 1924. *Passim*.
- <sup>5</sup> *Nayaks of Madurai*, pp. 89-93.
- <sup>6</sup> Professor R. Sathyanatha Iyer in his *Nayaks of Madurai* contends that H. Viswanatha Nayak (1529-1564) introduced the Polayagar System (pp. 50-64).
- <sup>7</sup> The country correspondences of the Tamilnadu Archives give an entirely different picture.
- <sup>8</sup> A place visited by St. Francis Xavier. Xavier's letters C Jesuit (1544 A.D.) are also available.
- <sup>9</sup> See Appendix.
- <sup>10</sup> S. Kadhivel's Reports to the Regional Committee for Survey of Historical Records, 1964-65.
- <sup>11</sup> This is not to cast any aspersion on the missionaries. It is only a matter of fact narration.
- <sup>12</sup> The write-up on the private documents is based in my reports to Tamilnadu from 1963 to 1969. This is incorporated in my reports to the Regional Committee for Survey of Historical Records, Madras (1963-69),

# SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF TAMILNADU (MODERN PERIOD)

JOSEPH DIVIEN

*(Madurai Kamaraj University, Tamilnadu)*

## I

IN HISTORY there is no beginning and no end. Everything is continuous. Periodisation is the convenient term commonly used by various historians in order to highlight the main stages and the significant turning points of a country's history. Viewing from this point, the history of modern Tamilnadu may be said to have begun with the coming of the Britishers who came first in the disguise of traders, but became rulers of India ultimately.

The history of modern Tamilnadu can be conveniently divided into three periods, (1) Pre-nationalist European rivalry phase up to 1885, (2) The Era of Freedom struggle and the role of Tamilnadu (1885-1947), and (3) the contemporary period since 1947. In this paper, an attempt is made to evaluate the literature available on the modern history of modern Tamilnadu, only relating to the first two phases.

## II

### PRE-NATIONALIST PHASE UP TO 1885

The major events relating to the pre-nationalist phase in the history of modern Tamilnadu were the arrival of the English and the French, the Anglo-French rivalry and the Carnatic Wars (1740-63), the emergence of the British as the ruler of

Tamilnadu, the device used by the British to wrest power from the Nawab of Arcot, the various anti-British feudal uprisings (1798-1820) and the consolidation of the British rule in Tamilnadu.

Even though the Britishers entered India around 1600 A.D. they had to cross many a hurdle before establishing their supremacy in the Madras Presidency. The inefficient administration of the native rulers in their respective places coupled with the Britishers' masterly technique of diplomacy which was found wanting in the case of the French helped them to outwit their native and European rivals. This resulted in the Carnatic Wars (1740-63) which in the initial stages was a struggle between the French and the native rulers, later on turned to be a struggle for supremacy between the French and the British.

### *Sources for the Carnatic Wars*

Abundant source materials are available for this period in French, English and to a certain extent in Vernacular works. *The Travels of Abbe Carr in India and the Near East*, *Memoires de Francois Martin*, *Le Sieur Luillier's Nouresu Voyage aux grandes Indes avec une instruction pour le commerce des Indes Orientales*, *Abbe-Raynal, History of the Indies, Vol. II*, translated from the French by J. O. Justamond are very helpful in this regard. Materials for this period are also found in a number of French journals like the *Le Courier des Indes*, *Le Courier de France* and *Revue Historique de l'Inde Francaise*.

The records available in the Madras Archives are indispensable for this period. For example, *The Diary and Consultations, Vols. I and II*, *Despatches from England, Vols. I-XVI*, *Despatches to England, Vols. I and II*, *Letters from Fort St. George, Vols. I-XIII*, and *Letters to Fort St. George, Vols. I-IX*, available in the Madras Record office throw light on the various manoeuvres employed by the British during the Carnatic Wars, which the French lost. In short, the French lost Tamilnadu except Pondicherry, Karikal, Mahe and Enam.

For the Anglo-French struggle, Robert Ormes' classic work

*History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, H. H. Dodwell's masterly *Dupleix and Clive*, A. Martineau's *Dupleix et L'Inde Française* are also immensely useful. In this connection regarding the French role, the secondary source S. P. Sen's *The French in India* (first establishment and struggle) throw interesting side lights. It is a detailed research work which also ably analyses with perspective the weaknesses and the strong points of the rival French and British powers. The bibliography provided at the end of this book would be useful to all researchers of this period. The author's *French in India* (1763-1816) is an excellent work on the final phase of the French Power in India.

The English source material mainly explains the English view point. For example, J. S. Afonso's *Jesuit Letters and Indian History*, H. D. Love's *Vestiges of Madras*, Vols. I and II, Malleson's *History of the French in India* can be placed in this category.

The English historians have the temptation to justify the British view points, and hence these works suffer from exaggerations, extravagance and pro-British prejudices. Therefore, one has to be careful while using such source-materials. The object of research should be to draw conclusions with objectivity and balance.

Professor S. P. Sen's contribution referred to earlier is much more reliable, because it does not suffer from bias. To a certain extent, it is also free from subjectivity.

### *Vernacular*

We do not have abundant vernacular source-materials except Ananda Ranga Pillai's *Diary* in twelve volumes which serves as a vital supplementary source for this period.

### *The English and the Nawab of Arcot*

The Nawab of Arcot who exercised sovereignty over most of Tamilnadu in the eighteenth century failed to maintain a

clean administration. The conflicting political interests in the area did not allow the ruler to maintain law and order which the British fully made use of and made themselves masters ultimately. Regarding these aspects plenty of primary source-materials in the form of records are available. For example, *The Military Country-Correspondence* contains various primary source materials, such as the correspondence between the Nawab of Arcot and the British Madras, etc., also throw light on the administrative system and the foreign policy of the native rulers and the British. They explain the British image of the "oppressive policy" followed by the native rulers.

The following are the secondary source-materials providing information regarding the revenue, judicial, and village administration of the Nawabs of Arcot : S. S. Raghava Iyengar's *Progress of the Madras Presidency During the Last Forty Years*, the *Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, William Hicky's *The Tanjore Maratha Principality*, C. S. Srinivasachari's *Village Organisation in the Madras Presidency*, *Village Communities in South India* (Connemara Library, Madras), B. S. Ward's *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of Madura and Dindigul*, Vol. 3, T. Turnbull's *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of Tirunelveli*, and M. Wilk's *Historical Sketches of the South of India*.

Thus we notice some works relating to a particular region of Tamilnadu like Tanjore, Madurai and Tirunelveli have also begun to appear. These in-depth studies which could be described as Micro-analysis are pioneering works and have in turn inspired many young Tamils to pursue similar research goals.

After the surrender of the Nawab of Arcot, the British exercised direct control over the Poligars or the subordinate rajas. In spite of their initial resistance they had to finally bow down before the British might. Of these Poligars, who resisted the British, the most famous was Katta Bomma Nayak whose revolt against the British is popularly known as the Poligar-rebellion (1798).

The primary source-materials for this period are the *Revenue Consultations, 1798, Board of Revenue Consultations, 1799, Tiruchirapalli Proclamation of Marudu Pandyan, Revenue Sundries, 1801, Secret Sundries, 1799 Military Consultations, 1799, J. Welsh's Military Reminiscences, Vol. I, and Panjalamkurichi Azhivu Charuthira Kummi*, leaves Nos. 82-86. Colonel Mackenzie's manuscripts are indispensable for the study of Poligars. The Madras University has published in two volumes *Mackenzie Manuscripts*. They portray how various palayams originated in Tamilnadu and how they struggled against the British. However Mackenzie's manuscripts should be used with caution since the materials collected by Mackenzie have not been cross-checked by him.

The secondary source materials are : J. F. Kearn's *Panjalamkurichy Poligar and the State of Tinnevely* and K. Rajayyan's *South Indian Rebellion*. These two works, one by a European and another by a South Indian are contrasts. The European work paints Katta Bomman as an anti-British rebel, and not as a nationalist. But K. Rajayyan portrays Katta Bomman as a pioneering nationalist who laid the foundation of the Indian nationalism. He also holds the view that the Poligar rebellion as a part of the beginning of the national movement. K. Rajayyan's work throws a view point which is debatable. Because national movement of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries were led by middle class leaders and participated to a certain extent by the masses throughout India. But the anti-British revolts of the Poligars were led by feudal classes without much mass participation and were local in character.

Plenty of secondary source materials are also available on Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan and their relations with the British in Tamilnadu. *Mackenzie Manuscripts* also give details relating to Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan's encounters with the Poligars of Tamilnadu. Bowring's *Hyder Ali and Sultan Tipu*, N. K. Sinha's *Hyder Ali*, Sir John Malcolm's *Political History of India from 1784 to 1823*, Mohibbul Hussain Khan's *History of Tipu Sultan*



are valuable in this context. B. Sheik Ali's *British Relations with Haider Ali* is a masterly analysis which corrects some of the prejudices passed on to us by the British historians. In fact, if Katta Bomman could be considered as a pioneering nationalist, then Haider and Tipu can also be described as anti-British nationalists and whose claims for this place are much more substantial than those of Katta Bomman.

On Vellore Mutiny (1806), besides K. Rajayyan's *South Indian Rebellion*, we have also information from S. S. Furnell's *The Mutiny of Vellore and Secret Sundries for 1806*, Vol. I.

### *Consolidation of the British Rule*

After putting down the Peninsular Confederacy, the British East India Company proceeded with the consolidation of its authority over the Tamilnadu districts. It reformed the land revenue administration, reorganised the judicial system and promoted communications.

The important primary source-materials for this period are the *Revenue Consultations*, Madras, Vol. 96, 1799, *Revenue Despatches—from Madras to England*, Vols. 528-546, 1803, *Court of Directors Revenue Despatch to Madras*, 1815, *Board of Revenue 1807-1820 Consultations*, Baliga's *Manual of Madras Administration*, Vol. 2, *Public Despatches to England* 1799, Vol. 35, *Public-Consultations* 1801, Vol. 25, *Judicial Regulations*, Madras 1816 and *Judicial Despatch from England*, 1833.

About the secondary sources, we have materials in abundance. J. D. Burdillon's *Remarks on the Ryotwari System of Land Revenue as it exists in the Presidency of Madras*, B. H. Baden-Powell's *The Land Systems of British India*, N. Mukherjee's *The Ryotwari System in Madras, 1792-1827*, W. Holloway's *Notes on Madras Judicial Administration*, J. B. Norton's *The Administration of Justice in Southern India*, T. H. Beaglehole's *Thomas Munroe and the Development of Administrative Policy in Madras, 1792-1818*, A. Sarada Raju's *Economic Conditions in the Madras Presidency, 1800-1850*, C. S. Srinivasachari's *History of the City of Madras*, P. J. Thomas and B. Natarajan's *Economic Depression in the Madras Presidency (1825-54)*,

*Economic History Review*, Vol. 2, 1936 and B. S. Baliga's *Studies in Madras Administration* are quite helpful for a researcher working on the history of the British rule in modern Tamilnadu.

These works clearly prove that the British had sounded the death-knell of the indigenous industries of Tamilnadu and introduced the system of private ownership, which replaced the self-sufficient communal cooperation ownership system. A. R. Desai's *Social Background to Indian Nationalism* ably analyses these aspects relating to British India and his conclusions are broadly applicable to Tamilnadu also. It appears that so far no work similar to A. R. Desai's has been attempted relating to Tamilnadu.

The end of the eighteenth century saw the end of an era in the politics of Tamilnadu, for in 1801, the merchant representatives of Britain began to rule practically the whole of Tamilnadu and some adjoining Telugu and Malabar districts which constituted the formation of the Madras Presidency. It was administered by the Governor and the Council over which he presided. The British rule in Tamilnadu as part of the Madras Presidency lasted for hundred and forty-seven years which can be divided into two divisions, namely, from 1801 to 1857 when the East India Company maintained administration over the Madras Presidency through various departments created for that purpose and the latter period of ninety years from 1857 to 1947 during which the Tamil country came under the rule of the British Crown. The latter governed the country through its Viceroy from the Indian imperial capital and the Governors in the Presidencies.

For this period, the records preserved in the Tamilnadu Archives are indispensable primary source materials. In fact, records on the British period are available right from 1670. It was Lord William Bentinck who took great care in preserving the records pertaining to different departments. There are records of the Government in the Public, Education, Health, Military Department, etc., from 1857 to 1973, records of extinct

departments, such as the *Mayor's court*, the *Coroner's court* and the records relating to ex-Dutch and Danish possessions in India, the *Modi records*, the records of the Government in the *Finance*, *Home*, *Judicial*, *Law Departments*, etc. from 1857 to 1972, the records of the Government in the *Revenue*, *Agriculture*, *Food*, *Industries*, etc., from 1857 to 1972.

There are also plenty of secondary sources for this period, such as S. Raghava Iyengar's *Forty years Progress of the Presidency of Madras*, C. S. Srinivasachari's *Social and Religious Reform Movements in the 19th Century*, F. Buchanan's *A Journey from Madras Through the Countries of Mylapore, Canara and Malabar*, and R. Caldwell's *A Political and General History of the District of Tinnelvely in the Presidency of Madras*.

In this connection it may not be out of context to point out that many Indians, especially since the beginning of the twentieth century have begun to write the history of Tamilnadu. Some of them suffer from Tamilo-centric approach, but still they have corrected many misguiding opinions of the British historians. They have also explored new avenues and thus have enriched the neglected Tamil history. A few South-East-Asian historians like R. Suntharalingam and many American historians like R. E. Frykenburg, R. L. Hardgrave (Jr.) and Eugene F. Irschick as well as British historians like Christopher John Baker, David Arnold and David Washbrook have also invaded the field in recent years.

### III

#### FREEDOM STRUGGLE AND THE ROLE OF TAMILNADU

South India particularly Tamilnadu played a dominating role in kindling the patriotic fervour among millions of men. Even though the attempts made by Vellu Thambi, Puli Thevar and Katta Bhomman of Tirunelveli district, Marudu Brothers of Sivaganga, and the Vellore Sepoys ended in failure, yet they paved the way for the Tamils to adopt a new method resulting

in the establishment of the branches of Indian National Congress in Tamilnadu after 1885. But the idea of establishing a political organisation even before 1885 had been there for long in the minds of the Tamils. Relevant materials regarding these are available in the Centenary-volume published by *The Hindu*. The role played by G. Subramaniya Iyer and his associates is yet to be studied in depth with perspective.

The Indian National Congress carried only resolutions on constitutional agitation which was not liked by the Extremist section which stood for 'Direct Action'. Ultimately the Congress split into two sections, Moderates and the Extremists at Surat in 1907. V. O. Chidambaram Pillai from Tamilnadu was a staunch supporter of Tilak's political ideas and philosophy. Defying the orders and as a rival to the British enterprise (East India Company), he started the Swadeshi Steam-Navigation Company. For some of his public speeches condemning the British government, he was charged with sedition and imprisoned. Consequent on his arrest, riots took place at Tuticorin and Tirunelveli in 1908.

The partition of Bengal, also led to the Terrorist movement in Tamilnadu. V. V. S. Iyer, Tirumala Acharya, Madaswamy Pillai, and Nilakanta Brahmachari, were the guiding forces of the Terrorist movement. Under the influence of Tirumala Acharya, Vanchi Iyer of Shencottah, shot Ashe, Collector of Tirunelveli at Maniyachi Junction in 1912. He shot himself dead and his companions were imprisoned for a long term after the trial known as the 'Tirunelveli Conspiracy Case'.

#### IV

With the coming of Mahatma Gandhi into the political scene, the Indian National movement turned to be a non-violent mass movement. Gandhiji's non-cooperation, Khilafat, Civil disobedience and Quit India Movements were based on the philosophy of non-violence.

Tamilnadu contributed in a large measure to the success

of Gandhiji's movements. In the Non-cooperation Movement, thousands of students withdrew from schools, hundreds of advocates like S. Srinivasa Aiyangar, S. Satyamurthy, C. Rajagopalachari, M. Bhaktavatsalam gave up their lucrative post at the bar. They also boycotted the elections held under the Montford constitution. When the Swarajist Party was formed in 1923 by C. R. Das with the support of Motilal Nehru, Tamilnadu's stalwart representative was S. Satyamurthy. When he became a member of the Central Legislature, the Government realised that there was a 'real rebel' who put forth a number of interpellations and supplementary questions. This even made the government call him 'Supplemurthy'.

In the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, thousands of persons in Tamilnadu participated. Rajagopalachari's historic march to Vedaranyam to break the Salt Law and the arrest of thousands of persons like Sardar Vedaratnam Pillai, K. Kamaraj, Namakkal Kavignar, Muthuranga Mudaliar, A. Vaidyanatha Aiyer, Dr. V. S. S. Sastry—all these speak by themselves.

When the Congress decided to accept office in 1936, it was S. Satyamurthy who carried on a whirlwind campaign in Tamilnadu on behalf of the Congress and was chiefly instrumental for Congress sweeping the polls in the elections. But when Rajaji formed the Congress ministry, to the dismay of all, Satyamurthy did not find a place in the Madras Congress Ministry.

In the 1942 Quit India Movement, Tamilnadu played an important role. K. T. Kosalram, V. S. Sankara Subramanya Mudaliar, Yagneswara Sarma, all belonging to Tirunelveli, M. P. Sivagnanam of Madras, R. Chockalaingam Chettiyar of Karaikudi, Kuppuswamy Mudaliar of Vellore, Chidambara Bharathy of Madurai, K. Rajaram Naidu, S. Satyamurthy, K. Kamaraj, Kumaraswamy Raja, Avinasalingam Chettiyar and hundreds of persons from other districts were all clapped into prison owing to their participation in the August Revolution.

Even though only a gist of Tamilnadu's role in the Freedom Struggle has been given here, the source materials covering the period from 1880 onwards till the advent of independence



are in abundance. The following are the primary-source materials for the period mentioned earlier : *Fortnightly Reports (Police)*, *Confidential Files*, *Police History Sheets*, *Madras Mahajana Sabha Records*, *Madras Native Association Proceedings*, *Madras Legislative Council Proceedings*, *Central Legislative Assembly Proceedings*, *All India Congress Committee Proceedings*, *Tamilnadu Congress Committee Proceedings*, *Swaraj Party Proceedings*, *Justice Party Proceedings*, *Muslim League Party Proceedings*, *Communist Party Proceedings*, *Indian Annual Register*, *Civil Disobedience Enquiry Reports*, *Statutory Reforms Commission Reports*, *Indian Franchise Committee Reports*, *Round Table Conference Reports*, *Census Reports*, *Madras Almanac*, *Proceedings of the Government of Madras* (available in the Tamilnadu Archives and State Archives, Hyderabad) pertaining to *Law Department*, *Revenue Department*, *Local and Municipal Department*, *Local Self-Government Department*, *Public Department* and *Education Department*.

In addition, there are also a lot of private papers which are a mine of information on the period. They are given below : *All India Congress Committee Papers*, *Erskine Papers*, *W. W. Georgeson Papers*, *Goschen Papers*, *Halifax Papers*, *M. R. Jayakar Papers*, *P. Kesava Pillai Papers*, *Linlithgow Papers*, *T. I. S. Mackay Papers*, *Sir Christopher Masterman Papers*, *G. A. Nathan Papers*, *Motilal Nehru Papers*, *Rajendra Prasad Papers* (microfilm with Anil Seal, Cambridge), *K. V. Reddi Naidu Papers*, *C. R. Reddy Papers*, *Satyamurthy Papers* (microfilm with Anil Seal), *R. K. Shanmugam Chetty Papers* (with R. Sunderraj, Coimbatore), *P. S. Sivaswami Iyer Papers*, *Sir Sydney Wadsworth Papers* and *Willingdon Papers*.

Like the private papers, there are quite a number of newspapers and periodicals largely responsible for fostering national consciousness among the Tamils. First, let us look into the newspapers, Vernacular and English as well. *Swadeshmitran*, *Desabhaktan*, *Navasakti Ananta Pottini*, *Cenkunta Mittiran*, *Viduthalai*, and *Kudi Arasu* were some of the important Tamil newspapers. *The Hindu*, *Hindu Weekly* (1926-1930), *Indian Patriot*,



*Indian Review, Madras Mail, The Mirasidar/Miracutar* (English and Tamil), *Tarul Islam* (Tamil), *Young India, Musalman, Justice, New India, Madras Standard, Madras Times and Spectator*.

Regarding the periodicals, we can mention (1) *Hindu Reformer and Politician*, (2) *Madras Christian College Magazine*, (3) *Madras Christian Instructor and Missionary Record* and *Madras Native Herald*, all published from Madras.

Reports on English Papers owned by Natives examined by the Criminal Investigation Department of Madras, and on Vernacular papers by the *Translators to the Government of Madras* are available in the Tamilnadu Archives. The latter serves as an invaluable guide to understanding the political mind of literate groups largely untouched by Western learning.

Since there are numerous secondary source-materials available for the period of our study, it is not possible to make a list of these here. A few vernacular works have appeared on the role of Tamilnadu in the freedom struggle. Some of them are primary source-materials, such as the works of Bharati, Thiru Vi. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar, Rajagopalachari and the like. Thiru Vi. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar's autobiography, *I'alkkaik Kurippukal* ('Notes on Life') provides the most complete and intimate account of any of the Tamil political and social figures at this time. There are also biographies on Tamil freedom fighters like K. Kamaraj, S. Satyamurthy, (Rangaswami Aiyangar) and Ramaswami Naicker, A. Krishnamachariyar's *Arasiyal Gnani, Arankasami Aiyankar* (*Political Stalwart, Rangaswami Aiyangar*) is an invaluable work for an analysis of Tamil politics in the 1930's. It contains much that can be found nowhere else, including details on Rangaswami Aiyangar's editorship of the Tamil newspaper, *Swadeshamitran*. Perhaps the most fascinating of all the Tamil biographies is Sami Sitambaranar's *Tamilar Talavivar* ('Tamilians' Leader') which is life of Ramaswami Naicker. Though it contains partiality and bias, yet it accurately traces Ramaswami Naicker's connections with the Justice Party and the Self-Respect Movement. Sitambaranar had

access to a large file of materials unavailable to present day researchers, mainly clippings from *Kudi Arasu*.

Research works have been attempted on the role of the Congress in Tamilnadu's freedom struggle, the role of regional parties like the Justice Party, Swaraj Party and the Dravida Kazhagam. However no standard work covering the entire period 1885-1947 has appeared on the role of Tamilnadu in the freedom struggle.

*The Congress in Tamilnad (Nationalist Politics in South India, 1919-1937)* by David Arnold's monograph portrays the story of the evolution of the Congress in Tamilnadu from a small, exclusive political club of middle class Brahmins to a popular, broad based organisation that defeated the loyalist Justice Party and that emerged in the 1937 elections. The author's conclusion that Indian independence was a compromise rather than a triumph for Gandhi's strategy is open for discussion. But the work is an invaluable addition to the massive literature on national politics.

*The Politics of South India, 1920-37* by Christopher John Baker is yet another scholarly work on the nationalist movement in South India. The author examines the political changes in the Madras Presidency at a crucial period in its history. The book covers two important political movements that South India witnessed during this period; firstly, a division of political forces along lines of caste and, secondly, the growth of nationalist organisations to a dominant position in provincial affairs. The author's authoritative assertion that in many ways the events in the South followed a pattern common to India as a whole should be read with caution. But undoubtedly, this book is useful and informative and enriches our better understanding of the present day politics in India and of Tamilnadu in particular.

*A Hundred Years of the Hindu* (The Epic story of Indian Nationalism) is yet another significant contribution made by *The Hindu* towards the cause of national movement. It is the absorbing, exciting story of a great newspaper from which one is able to derive a grandstand view of the Indian battle for freedom.

against the biggest imperial power, the world has ever seen. It is also the chronicle of the changing social and economic scene, reflecting the emergence of new revolutionary forces and thought over a century which has changed the face of India.

*Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, 1852-1891*, by R. Suntharalingam provides a comprehensive account of the role played by the Madras Presidency in nationalist politics during the late nineteenth century. It is a work which can be considered a shade better than Anil Seal's *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* in which the author has not done full justice to the Madras Presidency's part in the grand drama that he unfolds with such lucidity and liveliness.

Eugene F. Irschick's *Politics and Social Conflict in South India* (The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil separatism, 1916-1929) is an attempt to evaluate the effect of a regionalistic movement during the second and third decades of the twentieth century. The field taken up for study by the author is one of the significant aspects of contemporary Indian social and intellectual history.

## V

### CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that there is no paucity of materials on the history of modern Tamilnadu. Due credit must be given to the British for having maintained in a systematic manner the records relating to the period of the British rule in Tamilnadu, most of which are available in the archives. However one main defect relating to the source-materials for the period up to 1870 was the lack of sufficient corroborative materials. In contrast, especially since 1878, large number of secondary source printed materials began to appear, which could be used as corroborative evidences. This was because vernacular and English newspapers and journals as well as printed books on politics began to flood the market after 1878 only.

In spite of the availability of sufficient materials, it must be frankly admitted that no outstanding scholarly research work on the role of Tamilnadu in the freedom struggle has appeared. Only a few well documented works like R. Suntharalingam's work referred to earlier, have attempted to analyse the growth of national movement relating to certain periods in modern Tamilnadu. In contrast, impressive work has been done relating to the separatist movement and social changes in Tamilnadu in the twentieth century. N. K. Mangalamurugesan's recently published *Self-Respect Movement in Tamilnadu 1920-1949* is yet another scholarly work dealing with the origin and development of the Self-Respect Movement. It concentrates on the career and policies of E. V. Ramaswami Naicker during the period 1920-40. Unlike, E. Sa. Viswanathan's unpublished thesis on *The Political Career of E. V. Ramaswami Naicker—A Study in the Politics of Tamilnadu 1920-1949*, this work analyses the various phases of the Self-Respect Movement, which is very useful to understand the genesis of the Movement as well as its impact on Tamil society. Still, certain aspects, such as the Tamil Brahmin's reaction towards E. V. Ramaswami Naicker's social reform movement have not yet been studied in a systematic manner. Since India's independence, many Tamils have done research on modern Tamilnadu. It is also a pity that some of the Ph.D. theses relating to this period are not available to the researchers at large because they remain unpublished.

There is much scope for doing extensive research on the history of modern Tamilnadu. This would enable us to fill up the gaps as well as to rewrite what had already been written in the light of new materials and new interpretations. Thus in contrast to ancient history of Tamilnadu, which suffers from poverty of materials, modern history of Tamilnadu is blessed with a mine of research materials.

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The writer of the article has incorporated in his text exhaustive references to source-materials, primary and secondary, books and articles, relevant to the subject, dealt with in his paper. A separate bibliography has not been appended to the paper as it is considered redundant. *Editor.*

# SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF TAMILNADU (MODERN)

DR. A. SURYAKUMARI  
(*St. Mary's College, Tuticorin*)

## I

PERIODISATION is a controversial problem in the Indian context and this problem is recently discussed at length. This is true in the South Indian history context as well. The earlier classification of Indian history into the Hindu (Ancient), Muslim (Medieval) and European (Modern) epochs is unsatisfactory. History of Tamilnadu may be classified as follows :

1. Ancient Period : Sankam Age and after  
(c. 300 B.C. to c. 550 A.D.)
2. Early Medieval Period : Pallava, Pandya, Chola  
periods  
(c. 550 A.D. to 1310 A.D.)
3. Late Medieval Period : Muslim, Vijayanagar, Nayak  
and Poligar periods  
(c. 1310 A.D. to 1801)
4. Modern Period : From the establishment of  
the British Rule to the  
attainment of independence  
(1801 A.D. to 1947)
5. Contemporary Period : Independent India  
(Since 1947)

This classification takes into consideration not only the political aspects but also the socio-economic, cultural, religious, scientific and artistic features. The year 1801 denotes not only

the establishment of the British rule but also the coming of the modern western industrialisation and other phenomenon.

## II

1801 marks the end of the native rule in Tamilnadu and the establishment of the rule of the East India Company and the formation of the Madras Presidency.

Vellore Mutiny of 1806 is a military outbreak against the Company rule but it was suppressed soon. The Company provided a well-knit administrative set-up. The highly centralised Company rule began to effectively control the nook and corner of the nation. Ryotwari system was introduced in 1827 by Thomas Munro. The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 had no counterpart in Tamilnadu but the Company rule ended giving way to the Crown's rule. St. Ramalingar was the Tamil counterpart of St. Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the nineteenth century.

Tamil novel had its birth in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Writers like Vedanayakam Pillai and Rajam Iyer made significant contributions. The nineteenth century saw the spread of Christianity, English education, establishment of colleges and universities, introduction of railways, telegram and other fruits of science and technology. Madras Native Association and Madras Mahajan Sabha were the beginnings of the modern Political Associations in Tamilnadu. The early Congress party had a good base in Tamilnadu. *The Hindu* was born in 1879. *The Madras Mail* and the *Madras Times* were some of the important papers of this period.

The moderates, extremists and terrorists had their counterpart in Tamilnadu. Subramanya Bharathi was a great poet, visionary and an activist. G. Subramanya Iyer, V. S. S. Iyer, Vanchi Nathan, Subramania Siva, V. O. Chidambaram Pillai and Tiruppur Kumaran and Satyamurthy were all leading figures in the struggle for freedom. C. Rajagopalachari and K. Kamaraj were the greatest national leaders that Tamilnadu has ever produced.

Regional politics began with the Justice Party. It was a party of the upper caste non-Brahmins striving to get more



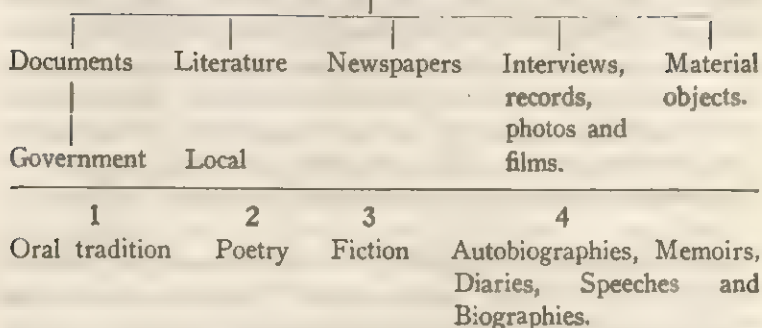
governmental positions for them. They were in power between 1920 and 1937 with intervals in the Madras Presidency under the diarchy system. This was possible since the Congress did not participate in elections, the voting right was given only to a very narrow section, communal reservations and the pro-British posture of the Justice Party. Congress won the 1937 elections and C. Rajagopalachari became the prime minister of the presidency in that year but the ministry resigned in 1939.

E. V. Ramaswami Naicker who started his political career as a nationalist in the early twenties slowly championed the cause of non-Brahmins and Dravidians. He led the anti-Hindi agitation and the Self-respect Movement. Then he took up the leadership of the Justice Party and in the early 40's he formed the DK which was more a social movement than a political party. C. N. Annadurai and others left him in 1949 and formed the DMK party which first grew into a strong opposition party in the early sixties and then came to power in 1967. After his death in 1969, M. Karunanidhi succeeded him. But in the early seventies M. G. Ramachandran left the party and formed AIADMK party. K. Kamaraj served the state well as its chief minister for ten years.

The formation of linguistic states in free India reduced the size of Tamilnadu. The development in the fields of education is quite commendable. It is often complained that Tamilnadu was ignored by the Central government in the economic field especially in heavy industries and railways. The slogan for a separate Tamilnadu by the DMK and others were modified in due course into a slogan for state autonomy and non-imposition of Hindi. The regional parties of Tamilnadu, though very strong now, because of the electoral alliance with national parties, have come into the mainstream of the nation's life and they appear to loose the regional elements at present.

### III

The sources for the history of modern Tamilnadu may be classified as shown in the diagram :

*Primary Sources*

The Government documents are mostly preserved at the Madras Archives. Some documents are in other archives inside and outside India. Now more scholars are at work at the Madras Archives. But still there is vast scope. At the basic level of data collection good progress is being made. Modernisation of the Madras Archives is an urgent need. Attempts should be made to collect and preserve records more fully. Plenty of local records are available from the different ex-rulers' families, courts, local administrative bodies, churches, temples, industries, hospitals, educational institutions, and individuals. Not much work has been done with these sources. Much of these sources are not well preserved. Sometimes they are positively destroyed either to conceal facts or just to clear the 'waste'. It is the duty of any modern government to preserve the records and make them available to scholars. It will be a costly affair but still worth preserving. A few epigraphical sources are also available for the modern period, such as the Tirupathi, Tirumala Temple inscriptions.

In a country like ours where illiteracy is still very much with us, strong and persistent oral traditions are in plenty. With the spread of literacy and urbanisation, these oral traditions may vanish. Before that, they should be collected and preserved and studied.

Poetry in Tamilnadu is slowly freeing itself from

conventions and traditions and thus it becomes more complex, relevant and realistic and consequently more useful to the historian. The fiction is the most popular literary genere of our own times and it reflects the social milieu much better than the poetry and hence it is more interesting to the historian. Autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, speeches and biographies are important sources. The pamphlets also may be listed in this category and they are available in abundance.

Newspapers are the most valuable sources for modern history. The history of newspapers in Tamilnadu goes back to the early decades of the nineteenth century and to-day there are too many of them. It is very unfortunate that many newspapers and magazines do not preserve their back volumes properly. Most of the modern historians of Tamilnadu are giving more importance only to the English papers but Tamil papers alone give more information about the local developments. *The Hindu* and *Mail* have recently celebrated their centenaries.

Records, photos and films are the boon of modern science and technology. The historian has to make a maximum use of them. Interviews will give an intimate picture of the recent history.

Material objects including monuments provide us with new insights for writing the history of modern Tamilnadu.

#### IV

So far as sources for this period are concerned, changes have come in their constituents. The literary sources have emerged as the principal branch of information and archaeological data have become less conspicuous. As the monuments and coins remain on the surface, there is no need for the archaeologist to dig with his spade for relics. Buildings continued to be erected but inscriptions came to be engraved less and less. The modern history of Tamilnadu is to be reconstructed with the materials culled from literary and archaeological sources, one supplementing and complementing the other.

The student of Tamilnadu is not famished of basic research material. With the establishment of British ascendancy, the state-papers, i.e., contemporary official documents, form the most elaborate and valuable source of information. The servants of the East India Company in India were required to keep very detailed written records of their transactions and deliberations for the perusal of their masters in England and their fortunate circumstances have undoubtedly increased the mass of documents which supply abundant historical material of first-rate importance. The correspondence of the various Indian states among themselves and with the British is also very valuable. These materials have been partially lost, but a great deal has been preserved and kept in the Imperial Record office in Delhi and the Indian Office in London. Since Independence the record offices were reorganised into state archives, of which those at Madras, Calcutta and Bombay possess the largest collections. The Imperial Record Office has been reorganised into National Archives. Number of important state papers in Provincial Record Offices, Indian States and in private possessions are also gradually coming to light. The Historical Records Commission and regional committees for the survey of Historical records have launched a drive for the acquisition of these papers. The collected papers are kept in the archival institutions.

The different categories of documents of the European powers in India furnish a large volume of historical information, mainly connected with military and revenue matters. The state papers of principalities like Hyderabad, Travancore and Coorgan are also numerous. But all of them are not preserved and catalogued. These archival sources are quite direct, copious and historically meaningful in that they throw light on the economic and social conditions as well as political and administrative matters. Chronology is no larger a problem. However, adequate margin needs to be allowed for the angle from which they viewed the trends and developments in this country.

The literary sources include ecclesiastical correspondences, diaries, government records and journals. By and large the ecclesiastical sources are the letters addressed by the Jesuit

Mission to the General of the Society at Rome. Originally written in Latin, Italian or Portuguese, they were translated into French and published by Father J. Bertrand of the Society of Jesus in four volumes between 1847 and 1854. The letters give not only a picture of their religious activity but also give an interesting account of social, economic and political matters that came to the notice of the missionaries. However the accounts are not entirely free from shortcomings. Particularly they focus their attention on religious matters, aimed at fascinating the European readers. It is not uncommon that they give favourable treatment to those who tolerated teachings of the gospel and adverse treatment to those who obstructed their activities. Given sufficient margin to the angle from which the fathers viewed at the events, their accounts stand the test of historical treatment.

The official documents of the government of Madras constitute a treasure-house of information. They belong to the categories: country correspondence (i.e., correspondence with native rulers), letters from and to St. George and Ft. St. David, sundries which include letters from and to the subordinate factories and despatches to and from England and District Collector's Reports.

The volumes described as 'Country Correspondence' enclose English translations of the letters written only in Tamil, Marathi and Persian, communicated to and received from local powers or deputies by the Government of Ft. St. George. The originals of these letters have disappeared already. The Proceedings of the Madras Council pertaining to the several departments of the Government are grouped on the basis of the nature of the subject. The series entitled 'General Letters', consist of the letters interchanged at intervals between the Government of Madras and the Board of Directors. Those sent to England contain full information about the affairs of the Presidency while those from England list the instructions of the Board of Directors together with letters of approval or disapproval of the Proceedings of the Company's representatives in India. Running over the same period of the Consultations, these General Letters are valuable as useful guides for research.



Varied details on land-revenues, property, justice and customs of the people were recorded along with commercial matters and military transactions. These official documents furnish detailed account of the issues in which the English took interest. Still flattering remarks, fantastic claims made by interested parties, mutual accusations and coloured statements, which occur in records along with other details demand caution. These official records of Ft. St. George can be profitably utilised for research by a process of mutual scrutiny and comparison.

The Factory Records are of consultative value and they shed light on the commercial and political relations of the English Company with Travancore. The Dutch records cover the period between 1657 and 1835; and the Danish records that between 1777 and 1845. These factory records, officially the Accompaniments to the letters from Coromandel in Dutch furnish much material about the relations of the European powers with the rulers of the Eastern and the Western coasts. Besides they shed light on the state of manufacture and commerce and provide side-lights on political and administrative affairs.

A few administrators, soldiers, and travellers of the period have left accounts of their experiences in the country. S. R. Lushington's *Report on the Tinnevely country* (1802) deals with the Poligar system and gives a sketch of the revenue administration of the province. In addition there are John Hodgeson's *Journal on Tinnevelly* (1807) giving a brief historical sketch of the province together with other matters of interest like religion, temples and charitable establishments, Colonel Thomas Munro's *Report on the "Revenue Affairs of South India"* and Thomas Turnbull's "*Geographical and Statistical Memoir of Tirunelveli and its Zamindaries*".

There are also guide books to the Districts in addition to the District Manuals and Gazetteers, etc. There are also independent reports like the Circuit Committee Reports, e.g., reports submitted by a committee appointed to visit the various factory councils in each Presidency to study and report on revenues and other matters, and East India Company Reports



The first of these was the fact that the government had been unable to secure the necessary funds to carry out its policy of expansion. This was due to the fact that the government had been unable to secure the necessary funds to carry out its policy of expansion. This was due to the fact that the government had been unable to secure the necessary funds to carry out its policy of expansion.

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## V

The most important among the secondary sources on the modern history of Tamilnadu, are listed here.

- Arnold, David : *The Congress in Tamilnad : Nationalist Politics in South India, 1919-1937*, (1977)
- Baden Powel : *Land Systems of British India*, 3 Vols., Indian reprint, (1970)
- Baker, C. J. : *Politics of South India 1920-1937*, (1976)
- Baliga, B. S. : *Studies in Madras Administration* (1949) -
- Beck, B. E. F. : *Peasant Society in Kongu : A Study of Left and Right Castes in South India* (1972)
- Beteille, Andre : *Caste, Class and Power : Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village* (1971)
- Caldwell, Robert : *A Political and General History of the District of Tinnevelly*, (1881)
- Dodwell, H. H. (ed.) : *The Cambridge History of India*, Vols. V and VI, Indian reprint, (1968)
- Frykenberg, R. E. (ed.) : *Land Tenure and Peasant Control in South Asia* (1977)
- Hardgrave, R. L. : *The Dravidian Movement* (1965)  
*The Nadars of Tamilnadu* (1969)
- Irschick Bugene, F. : *Politics and Social Conflict in South India. The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism 1916-1929*, (1969)
- Malclean : *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency* (1865)

- Majumdar, R. C. : *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vols. VIII, IX, X and XI, (1963-1976)
- (ed.) :
- Meenakshisundaran, : *A History of Tamil Literature* (1961)
- T. P. :
- Mookerji, Nilmani : *The Ryotwari System in Madras* (1962)
- Narayana Rao, K. V. : *Emergence of Andhra Pradesh* (1973)
- Nilakanta Shastri, : *A History of India*, Vol. III
- K. A. :
- Radakrishna Iyer : *A General History of the Pudukottai State* (1916)
- Rajayyan, K. : *The South Indian Rebellion* (1971)
- Barnett : *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism* (1970)
- Saradha Raju : *Economic Conditions in Madras Presidency 1800-1850* (1941)
- Sen, S. P. (ed.) : *Dictionary of National Biography* 4 Vols. (relevant portions)
- Srinivasa Raghava : *Forty Years Progress of the Madras Presidency* (1892)
- Iyengar :
- Subrahmanian, N., : *History of South India*, Vol. III
- Chopra, P. N. and (1979)
- Ravindran, T. K. :
- Suntharalingam, R. : *Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, 1852-1891* (1974)
- Washbrook, D. A. : *The Emergence of Provincial Politics. The Madras Presidency 1870-1920* (1977)
- Watch, James : *Faction and Front, Party System in South India* (1976)

Some of these works contain exhaustive bibliographies for the modern history of Tamilnadu. Now more and more fresh works are being undertaken at the different universities in Tamilnadu and elsewhere on the modern history of Tamilnadu. But much of these works are unpublished. And further, even active scholars are not aware of the work done at the different and distant universities. It may be noted in passing that the interest of the Westerners relates to the modern history of Tamilnadu. More work has been done on the history of twentieth century-Tamilnadu by Western scholars.

It is very unfortunate that practically no work has been done on the economic history, perhaps with the exceptions of Sardha Raju and Nilmani Mukerji and more recently R. E. Frykenberg. It is very unfortunate that more researches were done in the universities in the sixties on English Governors rather than on freedom struggle or on the life of the common people. Again people feel nervous whenever they enter even the beginnings of this century. We like to be 'more ancient' and 'secure' and consequently without relevance to the modern period. This may be one reason why historians do not command much respect and history itself is considered to be very dull.

Another unfortunate situation is that most of the works have appeared only in English. No good work on the modern history of Tamilnadu has been done in Tamil. One reason may be that English is still used as the medium in colleges and universities for studies and research in history. Another weakness of the Tamil historians is that they largely lack theory, methodology, and inter-disciplinary and modern approaches.

# SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF TAMILNADU (MODERN PERIOD)

S. RAVICHANDRAN  
(*University of Madras*)

## I

OF LATE there is a continuous discussion on the periodisation of History of India in general and history of Tamilnadu in particular. The traditionally accepted three periods of Indian history, namely, Ancient, Medieval and Modern are dated (a) the period up to 1206; (b) 1206-1707; and (c) since 1707 respectively. This may be true on an all-India basis because each period marks an era. But, this is not true of Tamilnadu, since the eighteenth century marked the transition from Hindu rule to Christian rule through Muslim rule, we can take the beginning of the eighteenth century as the commencement of the Modern period for the history of Tamilnadu.<sup>1</sup>

The historian's main stay is the sources. Basically there are two kinds of sources, the primary and secondary. A primary source testifies on its own knowledge and is a testimony of a witness or a mechanical device which was present at the time of occurrence of an event; and hence more dependable. For our purpose, inscriptions, Government records, correspondences (private and official), diaries, travel reports, unpublished ballads, and newspapers may be considered as primary.

A secondary source is one which borrows its knowledge from others. In our case Gazetteers, Government Reports for a non-contemporary period, books based on original sources, dissertations, etc., can be considered as secondary sources.



The inscriptions of the Nayakas of Madura and the local powers, the Tamilnadu Archives, the Saraswathi Mahal Library, the Oriental Manuscript Library Collections, the Jesuit Archives, Factory Records, Reports of Fullarton and Welsh, Folklore and the like may be classified in the former category. Gazetteers, Manuals, some Persian works based on documents, fiction, etc., may be classified under the latter category.

## II

### EPIGRAPHICAL EVIDENCES

Epigraphical evidences are mostly considered as primary sources, because they are contemporary—free from bias, interpolation and not coloured. They are issued directly under the orders of persons concerned and engraved under official supervision, the subject matter of inscriptions is also contemporary like grant of land, tax exemption, capture of countries, construction of temples, etc. However, much caution should be exercised in dealing with inscriptions because legends and exaggerations are often found and are easily recognised. But epigraphical evidences for the study of this period are few and far between. In fact we have such sources only for the period from 1700 to 1750, the period of the Nayaks and during the transition from the Nayak to the Nawab.

Most of the inscriptions issued by the Nayak kings are donative in nature. For example, Ranga Krishna Muthu Veerappa Nayaka's Telugu inscription of Shalivahana Sahaptham 622 is 1700 A.D. which speaks of the donation of lands for the upkeep of the Siva temple at Tirunelveli, also discloses by chance about the Dalaway Mudaliar at Tirunelveli (Governor of Tirunelveli). Further, the function of the Dalaway Mudaliyar, his relation with the kings of Madurai, his authority over the Poligars, etc., are also referred to in this inscription.<sup>2</sup> (By and large, most of the inscriptions of this period speak about temples and temple lands. Of course, there are few exceptional inscriptions which are political in nature). The inscriptions and

copper-plate grants of Ramnad and Sivaganga deal with religious matters, such as land donation for poojas, poor feeding, etc. All these epigraphical sources help to reconstruct the chronology.

Few other inscriptions pertaining to religious affairs incidentally throw much light on the social side of the area concerned. For example, Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Noyaka's inscription of 1719 in Tamil while describing an agreement drawn up by eight merchants of the village of Vettilakkundu promising to give a share of their grams annually to support the ritual of their village temple, also reveals the fact that those eight merchants of that particular village belonged to eight different castes. It also says that there were ten classes among the people of that village.<sup>3</sup>

### III

#### TAMILNADU STATE ARCHIVES

The Tamilnadu Archives have records in English dating from 1670 in its custody. The English East India Company from its headquarters in Madras was ruling over a few scattered factories and coastal settlements in the seventeenth century. With their involvement in internal politics and by developing their military power, they subjugated the rival powers and brought vast territories under their control. With the increasing power of the Company and its wider activities the records also began to grow.

The increasing accumulation of records compelled the Government to devise proper measures for their custody and preservation. The earliest repository thus established in Madras was the Council Room in the Fort House. It was, however, in 1805 that a record office came into existence as a separate entity. Lord William Bentinck pooled the work of record keeping for the different departments by separating all but the most recent records and placing them in charge of a special establishment. These records grew in bulk and were transferred

to the Madras Record Office established in 1909 at Egmore in Madras. This office which is now known as the Tamilnadu Archives house all the records of the secretariat departments barring those of the last three years, the records of the Board of Revenue and the Chief Conservator of Forest, barring those of the last ten years, all the English records of the District Collectors and the District courts, the survey records, the records of extinct departments and the records of the committees which have completed their labours.<sup>4</sup>

There are Dutch records from 1657 to 1845, the Danish from 1777 to 1845 and the Persian from 1670 to 1847; and of the successive governments of Madras from 1858 to 1972. The District Collectorate records transferred to the Archives range from 1769 to 1857. These are valuable source materials for the local histories.<sup>5</sup>

### *District Records*

The records in English of the District Collectorates and District courts up to 1857 have been centralised in Tamilnadu Archives. The records in regional language after 1857 are in the Districts themselves. The Archives receive annual reports from the District authorities on the conditions of records prior to 1857. Where the records are reported to be in no good shape necessary advice is given for their proper upkeep.<sup>6</sup>

The Records of the Madras government<sup>7</sup> form the most important of the sources for the period under study. The military-public and revenue consultations contain the correspondence between the Government and the local officials. The volumes called 'country correspondence' contain the correspondences exchanged between the local powers and the Government and at times intercepted letters of enemies. The despatches which passed between the Madras Government and the Board of Directors in England provide valuable reviews of the situation from time to time. The reports of the collectors, commissioners and committees appointed by the Government then and there,

deal elaborately with the problems which confronted the people and the government.\* (Detailed account of reports are given at the end of this paper, section XV.)

These documents give first hand information. There is little justification to question the reliability of these records even though a few documents require careful interpretation. The imperialistic motive which could have prompted the writers to furnish a coloured version of the events and personalities did not yet appear. The position of the British in India was still insecure and the officials of the company were bound to provide their supervisors with true accounts of the happenings. Little could they have imagined that their correspondence would become the source material of history.<sup>9</sup>

### *Factory Records*

Starting from 1657 the records of the factories at Fort St. George, Fort St. David and Anjengo are businesslike. Events were recorded as they were witnessed or heard, occasional mistakes in one letter were corrected in a later letter.<sup>10</sup>

Among Factory Records, the Anjengo records, the Dutch records and the Danish records are of consultative value. The Records of the Factory at Anjengo, an English trading settlement on the western coast shed light on the commercial and political relations of English company with Tiruvangoore. The Dutch records cover the period between 1657 and 1805 and the Danish records that between 1777 and 1845.<sup>11</sup>

The Dutch, a prominent commercial power in South India during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had several settlements along the coastal regions. Their factories changed hands with the English in the alternatives of war and peace. Incidentally records of Tuticorin, Sadras and Pulicat were lost, and the available records pertain to their settlements in Malabar, Cochin, Bombay and Bengal.

In 1825 the Reverend H. Haylingers of the Catholic Mission, Madras, completed the Press lists with English translation of important extracts. The Danish records consisting of nine bundles

and nearly 200 volumes listed by the Reverend K. Heiberg are from Tharangambadi,<sup>12</sup> furnish information about the Danes.

The Factory Records especially the 'Accompaniments to the letters' from Coromandal in Dutch furnish much materials about the relation of European powers with the rulers of eastern and western coasts. They throw light on the state of manufacture and commerce and on political and administrative affairs. The Dutch records of the period between 1735 and 1760 in particular are found useful in clarifying complicated events that followed Mughal intervention in Tanjore and Khan Shahib's rebellion in Madurai. In fact they present the view points of spectators of the development of the day.<sup>13</sup>

#### IV

#### JESUIT ARCHIVES AT SENBAKANOOR

About one thousand photostat copies of documents that furnish information about the socio-economic and political conditions of Tamilnadu from 1540 to 1800 are available here. They furnish information about the political and administrative set-up, social and economic problems and matters relating to revenue, business, etc. These documents are in Portuguese, French and Spanish. There are annual letters that were sent to Rome by the priests of the Madurai mission. Some of these priests had access to the local courts and hence could write about the political situation. Their mission demanded free mingling with the people and hence they could write about the people. The happenings of the country in which they were operating had a definite bearing on their life mission. And, therefore they had to report those things to their supervisors in Rome. However, since their central theme was religion, much of their writings centre round religion and the possibility of being biassed is more. And for the very same reason caution has to be exercised in using these records. But there can be no denying the fact that these contemporary records substitute and correct the government records for the period under study.

## V

## ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPTS LIBRARY

This is another repository of historical evidence. Manuscripts collected from private parties are housed here. Since the work of collection was undertaken by Col. Mackenzie, the manuscripts are called 'Mackenzie Manuscripts'. Most of them are now published by the University of Madras. These manuscripts help understand the state of affairs in Tamilnadu during the eighteenth century. A few collections like the Vadamalaya Pillayar Charitram which throw light on the history of Tinnevely area during 1740-1763 and the history of Ramnad, are very valuable source material. Some of the manuscripts, such as the Maravar Varalaru, give details about social history. There are other collections, such as Orme's Manuscripts and Taylor's Manuscripts. Some palm leaves are also available which render assistance to historical research. Most of these manuscripts, however, contain either over-statements or lack of understanding of the cultural background.

## VI

## SARASWATHI MAHAL LIBRARY—TANJORE

What Madras Archives is to the history of Modern Tamilnadu, the Saraswathi Mahal Library is for the history of Tanjore, thanks to the interest evinced by the Maratha Rajas of Tanjore. This library contains palm leaf manuscripts, a few copies of copper-plates, etc., pertaining to the affairs of Tanjore Raj. The aforesaid is for political affairs. On the cultural side, material on music, art, architecture, astrology, medicine and all that connected with the affairs of man are available. Modi records deserve special mention among the collections. These are the indigenous material dealing with the affairs of the state. Since some of the Rajas themselves were literary giants their correspondences are a treat to those who are interested in litera-



ture as well as in history. Some of the letters exchanged between the Rajas and the Danes at Tranqubar furnish information about the socio-economic conditions of the people at large and of the state. Details of commodities imported and exported could be culled out from these documents. The Reverend Swartz's dealing with the Rajas of Tanjore may be cited as a case in point for the dealings of the Raja with the foreigners.

A few Tamil manuscripts that deal with the social customs of the Kallas and the Wodaiyars of the area are worth mentioning. The chatram (choultry) documents are a class in themselves.<sup>14</sup> The English records kept here are only copies of those available in Madras Archives. All these records must be subjected to severe criticism both external and internal, before using them because an element of bias, over-statement, under-estimate, etc., is bound to occur in such types of records.

## VII

### THE PRINCE OF ARCOT RECORDS

The Arcot Palace at Madras, the last remnant of the Muslim glory, possesses records relating to the history of the Carnatic during the eighteenth century. Most of them are revenue records, copies of which are found in the Madras Archives also. A few relate to the political affairs of the Nawab. Correspondence in Arabic, Urdu and Persian deal with matters relating to administration, justice, army, etc. A few documents in Persian present a picture of the financial difficulties of the Nawab, well known incidents like the Carnatic wars, Poligar wars, the tussle between the British and the French and the Nawabs' relationship with the local powers, such as Pudukottai, Tanjore and Ramnad are found mingled in the sundries of the Nawab Archives.

## VIII

## PONDICHERRY ARCHIVES

French manuscripts and documents are preserved in the Pondicherry Archives. They relate to the period roughly from 1760 to 1816. They helped in reconstructing the history of the French in India from 1763 to 1793.<sup>15</sup>

## IX

## RECORDS OF LOCAL POWERS

The records available with the local powers, such as Ramnad, Sivaganga and Pudukottai provide first-hand information and help to reconstruct the history of the respective kingdoms. The Revenue accounts called the 'Olugu Olai' available in Ramnad Samasthanam office and Sivaganga palace furnish details about the revenue history of the respective states and their relation to the Nawab in that respect. The correspondence between the Marava kings of Ramnad and the Dutch from 1650 to 1762 mirrors the foreign policy of the Maravas and their growing desire of independence. The endowment charters of both the Marava powers, Ramnad and Sivaganga help to reconstruct their chronology. The copper-plates issued by these powers give information about the people's role in their fight for independence.<sup>16</sup>

The Pudukottai Samasthanam records depict the growing desire of the British to interfere in the affairs of the native powers in general and of the Nawab in particular.<sup>17</sup>

The official histories mostly on palm leaves kept in all Palayams, deal with the history of the Palayams right from their origin to the modern period. The correspondence exchanged between the Palaygars (Poligars) throw fresh light on the subject. The private records of the Medai Dalavoy Mudaliyar family, Tirunelveli, form another source of informa-

tion. They are a class in themselves and are of remarkable value for the political, administrative and social history of the time. Records of the influential families and private collections of individuals like Dr. Mohammed Ghouse of Madras and Mohammad Yasudin of Tiruchirapalli also fall into this category.<sup>18</sup>

No doubt there are exaggerated statements in these records. Therefore, they must be utilised with much caution and discrimination. But their value cannot be overlooked, for they furnish the cultural background of the people and much welcome light is thrown on the social history of South India. Most of these records have corroborated the evidence from other sources, while in some cases they form the only source. Bishop Caldwell's sweeping condemnation of these records, that they fall beneath the level even of tradition and are "little better than pure invention", has to be reassessed in a large measure. The impartial and scientific use of these native records is the only substantial basis for the reconstruction of this history.

## X

### LOCAL ACCOUNTS, BALLADS AND FOLKLORES

These quasi-historical material supplements facts and at times provides fresh material. Besides a few published works like the Sivaganga kummi there are unpublished kummis and villuppattus; the important among these is the Sivaramathalaivar kummi and villuppattu which provides a mine of information on the Maravas of Tirunelveli during the eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup> No doubt fanciful descriptions and imaginary legends find a place in them and therefore, they have to be used with discrimination. Rammappaiyan Ammanai, Khan Sahib Santai, Kattabomman Kathaippadal are the others of these category.<sup>20</sup> These are useful to understand the local set-up and tradition, which the official records do not contain.

## XI

## DIARIES

Diaries form one of the sources of modern history. The private diary of Ananda Rangam Pillai originally written in Tamil, covers a period from 1738 to 1761 A.D. They form an interesting and valuable narrative. He was the Dubash or courtier to Joseph Dupleix, the Governor of Pondicherry until 1756. He made it his regular practice to keep a diary but his motive in doing so is unknown. In 1892 it attracted the attention of the Government of Madras. Consequently it was translated into English and published in twelve volumes, three by Frederick Price and the rest by H. Dodwell between 1904 and 1924.

The period covered by the diary was of great importance in the South Indian history. Because during this period French and the English were fighting with each other for supremacy in South India by taking sides with the native rivals. From this diary we can get information for the political history of South India in the period covered by the diary. Further we can get information about the social condition of that period, such as social customs, superstitions and domestic matters.<sup>21</sup> On top of it all, minute matters about trade are also recorded.<sup>22</sup>

## XII

## JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS

The papers relating to disputes on successions in native states or dispute of native powers with the British government contain several records appended as exhibits in support of their respective claims. These incidentally provide material for history. For example, the papers connected with the suit filed by Mangleshwari Nachiyar in 1795 present a pen-picture of the political turmoil in the Ramnad country. It also brings out how

the British fished in the troubled waters. In another civil suit (1921) between the Kallars and the Udaiyars in the village Vallam near Tanjore we get splendid details about the customs and manners of both communities. Innumerable instances on the religious side could be cited.

### XIII

#### NEWSPAPERS

In the study of modern Indian history, the press is an important factor, as the fountain of sources. Newspaper history is inextricably tangled with political history. No proper history of Nationalism can be written without a survey of the newspapers as historical source material.<sup>21</sup> This does not mean that newspapers are exclusively useful for the history of the national movement. As the press was growing, it has dealt with various other problems, in fact all that matters to man.

In most cases the material from the press is contemporary. But that does not guarantee their authenticity. In some cases, such as a railway accident, drought and famine the newspaper correspondent has to depend on official reports which for reasons known to the Government or in the public interest may not supply the correct information. In some other cases the news agency may be pressurised. A few papers may because of their political identity deflect from the truth. But these shortcomings could be overcome by critical analysis of the material and by sifting them.

G. Subramania Iyer of *The Hindu* was a savant of Indian Nationalism. He stood for moderate views. It is difficult to separate Nationalism from *The Hindu* and the *Swadeshamithran*. The *Madras Standard* (1877), an Anglo-Indian newspaper, whose editorship was passed on to G. Parameswaram Pillai in 1892 was another main source. This paper presented the social situation in Madras and offered criticism on the political situations.

Though the newspapers started from 1820 their role in public was very much limited. Only with the advent of Indian National Congress in 1885 the newspapers assumed greater dimensions—they started moulding public opinion. During the early stages a few papers, such as the *Serampore Missionary News*, were in private circulation, with a limited goal of spreading the Gospel. A few other newspapers served as the organ of organizations like the Madras Mahajana Sabha spreading social ideas.

Some other newspapers concentrated on satire with a view to rectifying the defects among the elites. *The Madras Times* (1860)<sup>2\*</sup> was one of the earliest newspapers in English which dealt with the generalia.

With the formation of Indian National Congress the press in Tamilnadu entered a new era, more so with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi on the political scene. *The Hindu*, Madras, started in 1878 by G. Subramania Iyer stood for Hindu Nationalism. From then onwards till date *The Hindu* is a main source for history. *The Swadeshamithran* started in 1884. It stopped publication from 1976.

*The Hindu* in English and the *Swadeshamithran* in Tamil are indispensable source not only for the political history but for trade, commerce, social activities and social reforms also. *The Madras Mail* stands next to *The Hindu*. For Annie Besant and the theosophical movement, the back numbers of the *New India* and the *Common Weal* serve as sources. *The Justice*, the *Mirror*, in English and the *Nannadu*, *Vidutalai*, *Kudiyarasu Desha Bhatan*, etc., in Tamil formed basis for the self respect movement and the Dravidian movement in Tamilnadu. Apart from these, there are numerous newspapers and magazines which appeared from time to time help us understand the different cross-section of the masses.



## XIV

## FICTIONS

Modern Tamil fictions had its beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. From Vedanayagam Pillai and Rajam Aiyar down to Varadarajan and Jayakanthan, thousands of novels and short stories have been published. Some of them critically portray their age with remarkable accuracy. From these we can cull out information about the political and social condition of the people, their customs and conventions, etc. From these we can get a picture of the extent the Tamil society has been influenced by Western culture. Kalki's *Alai Osai* and N. Parthasarathi's *Satiya Vellam* depict contemporary political development. Recent fiction emphasises more on realism in life. They are the best sources for the changing attitudes of men towards life.

## XV

## REPORTS AND JOURNALS

A few administrators, generals and travellers of the period have left valuable accounts of the experiences in this country. James Welsh who served in the capacity of a British General, whose work entitled *War Reminiscence* is the best source for the Poligar rebellion of 1801. Lord George Pigot's narrative of the late Revolution in the Government of Madras dated 11 September, 1776 and 'Defence of Lord Pigot' dated 1771 speak of his transactions with Rajah Tulaji of Thanjavur and the British relation with Thanjavur beginning with the intervention on behalf of Rajah Serfoji in 1749. Report on the 'Tiruvendipuram Farm' dated 1775 sheds sidelights on the working of local bodies.<sup>25</sup>

Major William Fullarton's 'Report' to Madras Council dated thirteenth August 1784, a valuable account indeed, furnishes much information about the geographical features of

the Madurai country during the eighteenth century. The maladministration of the Nawab and the British military operation against the Kallas and the Poligars are also revealed in it.<sup>26</sup> S. R. Lushington's 'Diaries' (1796) and his report on the 'Tirunelveli country' (1802) deal with the Poligar system and give a sketch of the revenue administration of the province. In addition there are John Hodgeson's *Journal of Tirunelveli* (1807) giving a brief historical sketch of the province together with other matters of interest like religion, temples and charitable establishments. Colonel Thomas Munro's 'Report' (1808) on the revenue affairs of South India and Thomas Turnbull's geographical and statistical memoir of Tirunelveli are of great historical value.

A few other works too come under this branch of sources. Jean A. Dubois (1765-1848), a missionary of Pondicherry Mission wrote his *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*. Written in French it was translated into English and published by Henry K. Beauchamp in 1897. Tasean A. Dubois stayed in India particularly in the far south for thirty-one years. This offered an opportunity to him to observe the people closely conforming to their way of living, their manners, their ceremonies, their mode of clothing, even their prejudices. This enabled him to acquire a vivid picture of the social life of the Hindus in its minute details. His account is not only comprehensive but accurate, largely corroborated even by the present-day practices giving margin to the lapse of time. But it should be asserted that while he concentrates his study only on the social life of Brahmins, he dismisses the other communities, who constituted the bulk of Hindu population in a few paragraphs here and there. Still his work remains a collective of precious information about the social systems of the day. Francis Buchanan, at the direction of the Governor-General Marquis of Wellesley undertook a journey from Madras to Mysore, Cannanore and Malabar in 1800. His findings on the social and economic life of the inhabitants of the districts, he visited, were published in two volumes in 1870. He did not visit Madurai; still he deals matters of common interest like charitable

institutions, trade and manufacture in South India.<sup>27</sup>

Based upon field study and long contact with the inhabitants, these works are of considerable value. They throw light on the varied aspects of social and economic life, often left neglected by the official records.

## XVI

### PERSIAN NARRATIVES

A few Persian scholars have written sketches on the Wallajah dynasty, the ruling house of Carnatic during the second part of the eighteenth century. Mr. Ismail Khan Abjadi, the poet laureate, at the orders of Nawab Wallajah I (Muhammad Ali) composed the 'Anwar-nama' a poetical description of the history of the house of Nawab Anwar-ud-din. He took only such matters as could be conveniently utilised for colourful treatment. It naturally possessed the defects characteristic of a piece of poetry. However, Muhammad Ali commissioned another scholar, Burhwan Ibn Hasan of Tiruchirapalli to write another account in prose. The result was the composition of *Tuzak-i-Walajahi*, a work giving the story of the migration of the Wallajahs from Arab to India, an account of the Carnatic and a description of the Wallajah's struggle with the Navayats for supremacy. Mohammed Karim Khayurd-din Hasan Ghulam wrote the *Sawani hati-Mumtaz* a sketch of the regime of Wallajah I and four of his successors. This work clearly tells of the steady process by which the English superseded the Wallajahs as the ruling power of the Carnatic. Another scholar, Ghulam Abdul Kadir Nazir, in his *Bazar-i-A-Zamjahi* describes Nawab Wallajah's travel from Madras to Tiruchirapalli and then to Arcot. These works except the *Anwar-nama*, translated into English by Dr. S. Muhammad Hysayn Nainar, were published in five parts by the Madras University in its Islamic series between 1943 and 1950.

These Persian sketches suffer from those defects characteristic of the works written by courtiers in praise of their royal

patrons.<sup>28</sup> While they dismiss the rulers' shortcomings, they eulogise their achievements, the language, high flown indeed, borders on exaggeration of an empty bombast. For instance, Burhan Ibn Hasan describes the exaction of a contribution under threat of violence by Nawab Anwar-ud-din, from Raja Pratab Sing of Tanjore in these words : "When he (Pratab sing) saw the brave soldiers of the Sarkar (the Nawab's Government) swimming in the ocean of blood to uproot malice, and the aggressive fist of the victorious army reached his neck he turned away from the field of battle and grew repentant. He became obedient and paid into the auspicious treasury the sum due along with the fine."<sup>29</sup> These works, moreover, furnish neither connected nor succinct accounts and chronology is ignored or irregular. A critical analysis in the light of the information supplied by official documents and a provision for such margin as usually given for exaggeration are essential for gathering correct data from these sources.

It is impossible to discuss every source in detail in a paper like this. Therefore, only examples from each category are cited.

Comparatively speaking, published works on Modern history of Tamilnadu are few and far between. Dr. B. Natarajan utilised the entire Barramahal records in his thesis "The Ryotwari System", Mrs. Saradha Raju in her *Economic Conditions of the Madras Presidency* have made use of the Madras Archives' sources. Both have worked on economic history.

Professor R. Sathyanatha Iyer broke the ice by using the Jesuit records in his *History of the Nayaks of Madura* (1924). Professor V. Rengacharya, writing in the *Indian Antiquary* about the Madura kingdom has used the literary sources to advantage. Of course, Englishmen in the service of the company and later from the Government have used the official documents as sources and helped reconstruction of the history of Modern Tamilnadu. Notable among them are Robert Orme's *History of Indostan*, Volumes I to III (1764) and *History of Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan* (1861). Col. Welsh's *Military Reminiscences*, Volumes I and II, 1830

and the *Cambridge History of India*, are a few which based on original sources deal with the military and political history of Tamilnadu especially in the eighteenth century. These works lack strictly critical approach.

The Administrative Reports edited by Dodwell and Dr. Baliga are a class in themselves. Allowance has to be given for Governmental rodomontade. Another class of works utilizing the official sources are the District Gazetteers and their predecessor the State Manuals. Nelson's *The Madura Country* (1868) is a treatise which contains severe shortcomings. Stuart's *Manual of Tinnevely* (1879) and H. R. Tate's *Tinnevely Gazetteers* (1917) are works that incorporate original sources. Of course, they may not satisfy the scientific standards of today on the technical side. But their value and importance cannot be relegated. There are such Gazetteers for all the districts.

Recently, few scholars, Indian and foreign, have brought out some good works on Modern Tamilnadu. Among the Indian scholars Professors R. Sathiyanaatha Iyer, after a break of thirty years wrote *Tamilagam in the Seventeenth Century* (1956). Here again he used the Jesuit Archives and local accounts. K. Rajayyan's *History of Madurai* (1974) and the *South Indian Rebellion* (1971) are based on the documents of the Madras Archives alone. S. Kadhivel's *A History of the Maravas* (1977) is a demonstration of how best the indigenous sources could be used for the reconstruction of history (Burton Stein).

Among the foreign scholars Eugene F. Irshick's *Politics and Social Conflict in South India* (1969), Robert Hardgrave's *The Dravidian Movement* (1965), Sparrt P's *D.M.K. in Power* (1970), C. J. Baker and D. A. Washbrook's *South Indian Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940*, are worth mentioning. For the eighteenth and twentieth centuries atleast something has been done. But the nineteenth century remains in darkness.

Of late there is a regular stream of research scholars who want to work on Tamilnadu. But most of them choose either



the Freedom Movement or the Dravidian Movement. After Sarada Raju, no one has attempted on economic history. Social history is in a bad shape. Attempts must be made to concentrate on social history, cultural history, constitutional history and the development of trade and commerce, etc., by using the records of companies, such as Parry and Company, B and C Mills and a large number of firms that dealt with hides and skins.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> It is possible to argue that with the coming of the Portuguese on the east coast in the sixteenth century the Modern period commenced. However, since the area covered by the Portuguese and the Dutch interaction was only very little portion of Tamilnadu, it is better that we take the period when the whole of Tamilnadu came under the Muslims and the British, as the modern period.
- <sup>2</sup> Madras Epigraphist's Report, 1911, pp. 89-90 cited in R. Sathyanatha Iyer, *History of Nayaks of Madura*, Madras, 1924, p. 364.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.
- <sup>4</sup> 'Archives Week', a Brochure, published by the Madras Archives, August 1978.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> By Madras Government, I mean the East India Company's Government from 1802 to 1858 and that of the Crown after 1858. In the early phases of the eighteenth century, the British East India Company was assisting the Nawab's government and from 1785 to 1802 they were ruling on behalf of the Nawabs.
- <sup>8</sup> S. Kadhivel, *A History of the Maravas*, Madurai, 1977, pp. 4-5.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- <sup>11</sup> K. Rajayyan, *History of Madurai (1736-1801)*, Madurai, 1974, p. 50.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.
- <sup>14</sup> Discussed at the end.
- <sup>15</sup> S. P. Sen, *The French in India*, Calcutta, 1957, Preface, p. xi.
- <sup>16</sup> S. Kadhivel, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*



- <sup>19</sup> S. Kadhivel's report to the Regional Committee for Survey of Historical Records, March, 1963.
- <sup>20</sup> R. Edin Rajan and D. Gunasekaran, *History of Modern Tamilnadu*, Madurai, 1978, p. 1.
- <sup>21</sup> K. Rajayyan, *History of Madurai (1736-1801)*, Madurai, 1974, p. 40.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> Robert I. Crane, *Problems of Historical Writings in India*, India International Centre, New Delhi, 1963, p. 35.
- <sup>24</sup> It merged with the *Madras Mail* in 1921.
- <sup>25</sup> K. Rajayyan, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
- <sup>26</sup> S. Kadhivel, *Historical Methods*, Madras, 1977, p. 63.
- <sup>27</sup> *Supra* 26.
- <sup>28</sup> *Supra* 27.
- <sup>29</sup> *Tusak I-Walajahi*, Part I, p. 108.

# SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF PORTUGUESE AND DUTCH IN TAMILNADU

DR. S. KADHIRVEL  
(*University of Madras*)

## I.

THE HISTORY of Modern Tamilnadu should commence with the study of Portuguese interaction in Tamilnadu. It is generally taken for granted that the transformation to Western Colonialism commenced with the British intercourse. In a way it is true on the political front. But in the socio-economic front, the Portuguese had left indelible marks, which the Dutch for a brief period continued.

Two fields—agriculture and trade—were developed by the Portuguese, which tore the existing caste based occupation.<sup>1</sup> The present-day cash crops, chilli, cashewnuts, Manila Kottai (peanuts), tobacco, koya and a few varieties of plantation (Kolikodu-Calicut variety) were imported and introduced by the Portuguese which changed the economic structure of the Tamil country. A few communities like the Paravas and the Nadars had an economic boom and because of that attained a special social status in general and within their own communities in particular. The Paravas styled Coattukaran (those who wore coat) and Mesaikeran (those who used tables) and the Nadars started identifying themselves as traders and even as ksatriyas. For these reasons, I consider the Portuguese interaction as paving the way for modernisation in Tamilnadu. For the study of this period sources are available in London. Many scholars in India do not have access to them.

But fortunately vernacular records come to the rescue of the student of history.<sup>2</sup> These are in the form of letters exchanged between the village lenders, documents of the Portuguese churches (not included in the Jesuit letters), family records of those who had connections with the Portuguese in trade and commerce, and the like of course references and found in Goa collection.

Apart from St. Francis Xavier's evidences, the earliest document that speaks about the arrival of the 'Paranguis' on the eastern coast of Tamilnadu, near Tuticorin, is the family records to the Parava Jathi Thalaivar of Manapadu. He was a Hindu and devotee of Lord Muruga. On seeing the Portuguese vessels with commodities, he appealed to his God to save him and his people from the devilish-looking foreigners.<sup>3</sup> This happened in 1512.<sup>4</sup> The commodities brought by the ships included pulses, nuts and chillies.<sup>5</sup>

## II

The correspondence exchanged between the village leaders of Manapad, Tuticorin and Kagul, speak about the efforts of the Portuguese to settle down in the eastern coast where the waters were controlled by the Moors. These letters are in Tamil and can be dated roughly about 1525 A.D.

The Family records of the Pattan Mirzdar of Islapuram, which are in Persian and Urdu, furnish details about the activities of the Moors, who were displaced by the Portuguese from the western coast, taking shelter on the eastern coast and gradually trying to assert themselves over the Hindu Paravas of the Tamil coast. Incidentally an account of items dealt with in their trade is furnished. These sources give a picture of the conflict between the Paravas and the Moors, and the subsequent approach of the Paravas for help to the Portuguese and the conversion of the people of seventy villages *en masse* in 1532, and the converted Christians accepting the King of Portugal as their King.<sup>6</sup>

Manuscripts available with Fr. Peter Rayan Vijayapathi now in Bangalore, deal with the beginning of the Portuguese trade offsetting that of the Muslims of Kayalpatnam. It could be gathered from these sources that the scapegoat for the Portuguese in waters controlled by the Raja of Ramnad was pearl-fishing.

### III

The church records at Alandali near Tuticorin reveal the anxiety of the Portuguese to simultaneously develop trading interests in the eastern coast also (1542) and the appointment of the Parava Christians as the agents of the Portuguese on the eastern coast. From this beginning by the end of the sixteenth century these Paravas had become international traders.<sup>8</sup> They dealt with ginger, rice, cotton fabrics, cashew-nuts, chillies, etc.<sup>9</sup>

A representation submitted to the Dutch authorities of Tuticorin in 1665 by the Paravas of Tuticorin, furnishes details about the contracts entered upon with the Portuguese for farming in the Portuguese held villages. Specific mention about the farming of chillies, cashewnuts, peanuts, koya and types of cotton are found in these papers. And later on when the Dutch ascendancy was established on the western coast, the Portuguese had to purchase pepper from the Tamil country which was getting that commodity from the neighbouring Malayalam country for domestic consumption. To facilitate this purchase, chilli which was brought from Chile by the Portuguese and was cheaper was introduced as an alternative condiment. This was done with the help of the church, the Nayak of Madura and the local chiefs.<sup>10</sup>

The names of certain varieties of agricultural products bear testimony to the Portuguese influence in the Tamil country. Paranki Andi or Kappal Andi (cashewnuts), Manila kottai meaning peanuts brought from Manila, Kozikode plantain, etc. These references appear in Tamil literature of the post-sixteenth

century,<sup>11</sup> signifying that these were introduced by the Portuguese. For the cultivation of chilli by the Portuguese we find references of the agreements made with the Nayakas of Madura.<sup>12</sup>

#### IV

The living monuments like the Portuguese churches and records connected with the parish churches in Sathangulam, Alundalai and the family records of leading Parava families of Tuticorin, and the Persian manuscripts of Kuttala Marakayar family, furnish details of the involvement of the Portuguese on the socio-economic life of the people.<sup>13</sup> Although the political interaction of the Portuguese was short-lived, their impact on society is felt even today.

The Dutch interaction in Tamilnadu, though very much short-lived, had left distinct marks on Tamil society. Even today in the former Dutch area of Tamilnadu and in some cases all over Tamilnadu Dutch corrupt words are very much in vogue, for instance, Kuzni meaning the kitchen, kakzro meaning the latrine, mesai meaning the table, jannal meaning the window, and the like are understood even by the common man.<sup>14</sup> The Dutch were Protestants and the people they had to deal with in business after 1664, when Tuticorin came under them, were either Catholics or Hindus (in agriculture) but they showed remarkable tolerance in religious matters<sup>15</sup> and continued their business dealing with the Catholics who were agents of the Portuguese.<sup>16</sup>

As the article on sources for the history of Tamilnadu of the modern period, deals with official Dutch records, I confine to the documents in possession of Chevalier Roche Victoria of Tuticorin, a leading business family, from 1650 onwards. There are eleven documents.

Of the eleven documents, Nos. 1, 2 and 3 are originals written in old Dutch. Documents Nos. 1 and 2 are dated 1763 and No. 3 in 1773.

Document Nos. 1, 2 and 3 which are in old Dutch and of the eighteenth century deal with business transaction.

Talking about the records of the period of the occupation of Tuticorin by the Dutch Dr. H. R. Pate, the author of *The Gazetteer of the Tinnevely District*, says that they have unfortunately been lost or at any rate have not been discovered. These three documents which are written in Dutch must, therefore, be regarded as an important discovery throwing light upon the Dutch relations with the Paravars of the Tuticorin coast.

Document No. 4 dated 1782 written in Tamil is the original of a cowle given to Jathithalaivan Thongavooriyal Komasu Vasu Vithoria Adappanar by Raja Sri Kappitharam Uyila.

Document No. 5 is a copy taken in 1844 of a cowle given in the year 1783 to Jathithalaivan Thongapuri Yelatha Kurusuvasu Komus Rajammannia M. Mehyoer Orlavan.

Document No. 6 is the original order issued in 1780 by George Powney appointing Jathithalaivan to examine the pearl oyster rocks.

Document No. 7 is the original in English of a cowle given to Paravas of Tuticorin and dependencies together with the Tamil rendering of it. The date of the document is missing and it reads :

Be it known that the Paravas and other subjects who were under the control and authority of Sade Thalavan during the administration of the Dutch Government at Tuticorin are until the pleasure of the Governor-in-Council of Madras be transmitted to consider themselves under the protection of the Hon'ble English East India Company....

Document No. 8 : Sunnad in English dated 3rd 1808 granted by the Hon'ble Sir George Hilare Bart, N. B. Governor-in-Council at Fort St. George and its dependencies, to Cospes Anthony Dackruz Waz Corresh appointing him as Head Pattengathe of the seven sea ports of the coast of Madura.

Document No. 9 : It is the original of a letter written in English by His Lordship V. W. Vander Stranton, Chief Justice



of Colombo, dated 15th September 1815, requesting the Prince of Paravas to forward for His Lordship's information with least possible delay laws and customs of Paravas of Tuticorin upon which their civil cases and other disputes are decided, particularly, such as concerning inheritance, dowry, adoption, possession of grounds, gardens, etc., gift or donation, mortgage, hire, purchase, sale of male and female slaves, loans of money upon interests, etc.

Document No. 10 : Sunnad in Tamil dated May 8th 1856 given by the Collector of Tinnevely, Mr. J. Siva Durai, appointing Thongapuri Yalathar Kirrusu Vasu Palathan as chief of the Parava community.

Document No. 11 : Sunnad in Tamil dated 18.8.1889 given by the Collector of Tinnevely, Mr. J. A. Nicholson, to Don Gabriel De Cruz Lazar Motha Vaz appointing him as chief of the Parava community.

During that time they were in occupation of Tuticorin and its neighbourhood, the Portuguese treated the Paravas with consideration and under their influence many of them embraced Christianity. The headman of the Paravas was called Jathithalaivan. He was the secular head of the community and his office was hereditary.

In 1658 Tuticorin passed into the hands of the Dutch and remained in their possession till 1782, when it was captured by the English. Under the Dutch, succession to the post of Jathithalaivan required the ratification of the Government, a practice which the English adopted in their times. Tuticorin was restored to the Dutch in 1765 and was again captured by the English in 1795, along with Ceylon and continued to be under English occupation till 9 February, 1818, when it was handed over to the Dutch.

Document No. 5 in the list is signed by Eyres Irwin, who succeeded George Proctor as Superintendent of Tirunelvely district in 1783, George Powney, the signatory of document No. 6 was the collector of Tinnevely who in 1795 along with Col. Donald Campbell received the submission of the Dutch at Tuticorin.

Ceylon was ruled between 1795 and 1815 by British and Indian officials, who made no attempt to understand local conditions and customs. Legal distinctions were based on caste and race. A general codification of laws for the island was not attempted till very much later.

Document No. 9 dated in the year 1815 has to be understood in the light of the uncertainty and confusion that had prevailed in the administration of justice in Ceylon between 1785 and the report of Colebrook Commission.

In Document No. 4, 'Vithoria' is called Vithoria Adappanar. Adappanar was the title by which the Deputy of the Jathithalaivans in each village was known but Vithoria is also called Jathithalaivan in this document. The Paravas had a headman of their caste whom they regarded as their chief. He was called Jathithalaivan and he resided at Tuticorin. When the Dutch took over Tuticorin and got hold of the pearl fisheries of the Tamil coast in 1658, they proclaimed the Jathithalaivan of the Paravas as the Lord of Seven Seas.

In Document No. 8 dated 1808, Gospels Anthony Dacroos Waz Correeh is referred to as having been appointed as Head Pattangathar. Pattangathar is the same as Pattangatti, the title corresponding to Adappanar, by which deputies of the Jathithalaivan in the various villages were known and Head Pattangathar has to be understood as being equivalent to Jathithalaivan.

## APPENDIX

### Document No. 4

Cowle given to Sathi Thalaivan Thongapuriyil Komusu Vasu Vithoria Adappanar by Raja Sri Kappitharam Uyila, Tuticorin, on February 22, 1782.

We have spoken to your man Kandasamy Pillai about the duties and powers of yours towards me and those of mine towards you. We will extend to you and to your dependents at

Manapadu, Punnaikayal and Tuticorin, the same amount of respectable treatment as extended to your by the Dutch Co.

We will undertake to settle the business if there is any between you and the Chiefs of Palayan Kotta. As there is much business to be settled between us, we will consider you our child and treat you accordingly. So you have trust in us, and without any wavering, start quickly and come to us with your men. We have sent to you a model English Flag. So with such an English Flag and with your usual ceremonial ornamentation, you come in your palanquin with all splendour. We leave your house, and other sundry articles in charge of your men. So we order you to come leaving every thing in the hands of your man Swanava Athi Appaner and without any cause of any grievance in your village. Therefore come safely.

Year 1844 January 9th  
Prana Supala Sathira Mena

Year 1843

No. 32, Record of Plaintiff,  
(Sd)

Line 13 form A to N

Line 1 to 22.

#### Document No. 5

Cowle given in the year 1783, on the 23rd day of the month of Chittirai, to Sathi Thalaivar, i.e., Thongapuri Yelatha Kurusavasu Komusa lord of seven villages by Rajamannia M. Mahayur Orlaven Avl concerned with the authority of Tirunelvelly.

The cowle is—Now that the Parathava inhabitants of Tuticorin, Vypparu, Vammathu, Muthagaiyur, old Kayal, Punnaikaya, Virepandianpattinam, Alanthalai, Manapaddu, Thalai, Koodu Thalai, Chinnathalai, etc., which were under the control of Sethi Thalaivan have become the men of the Hon'ble Company, the Revenue Collectors (Maniakars) of these villages, must collect only the customary import and export duties and communication tolls. The monthly contributions, the Fish toll and the other dues to the Company are to be collected as per custom. Except for these, neither the Revenue Collectors nor

the Palayagars shall cause the Paravas the slightest grievance. If any one causes the slightest grievance to any one, against this order, this cowle shall be shown and taken again. Let this be known for certain.

Our seal and signature are affixed, we order that the monthly contributions and the Fish tolls due to the Honourable Company shall be given to Sethi Thalaivan.

Year 1844, month of January 9th  
Pranasupalasathiramena.

Document No. 6

Sethi Thalaivan of Tuticorin is hereby informed that, since I have been ordered to examine the pearl rock and since I come to know that you are in the knowledge of the whereabouts of such rocks and you had been appointed by the Dutch Co., for such purposes, I hereby appoint you for the purpose of examining the pearl oyster rocks. I have also written to the Secretary of Asarathu Nawab of Tuticorin informing him of his appointment for such purposes, and apprising him of your appointment. He will also appoint his own men for the purpose of examination. So along with them you look into the matter. Since I am appointing you in this work with complete trust in you, I hope that you will conduct yourself in a manner befitting the trust reposed in you. Therefore I hereby order you to examine the rocks perfectly well, with industry and vigilance. If you act accordingly you will be under the protection of the English Government. I want you to send me information daily about the nature of examination and the nature of the finds therein. When the examination is over, send me a statement about their estimated value and the amount of time and money which may be required for pearl fishing.

George Powney  
(Collector)

Document No. 10

Collector of Tinnevely Dt.

Mr. J. Silva Durai

Sunnad given to Thongapuri Yalthar Kurusuvasu Paldan.

As per your appeal made to us in your application dated 29th April last for favour of orders to appoint you to the post of your elder brother, Chief of the Parava community, in consequence of the latter's death, we hereby appoint you to the post held by your elder brother and allow you to execute the duties until further orders.

J. Silva

1856

May 8

Seal

Document No. 11

Collector of Tinnevelly

Mr. F. A. M. Nicholson.

Sunnad given to Don Gabriel De Cruz Lazar Motha Vas. As per your appeal made to us in your application No. 3936 dated July 24th, to appoint you to the post held by your grandfather the Chief of the Parava community of Tuticorin, in consequence of the latter's death, we hereby appoint you to the post held by your grandfather and execute the duties thereof, until further orders.

F. A. Nicholson,  
Acting Collector

(Sd)

18-8-89.

To

The Revered Sir Ragaviya, Tahsildar of Penganeri Taluk is that the memo along with the report of the present Taluk Officers etc., regarding the customary payment made and the advancement made by the Patel of the Taluk, stating that Khaji Sayed Mohamed was in the custom of receiving one Hoon (Pagoda) for every month as originally directed, is hereby acknowledged. Taking into consideration of the above facts, you are hereby directed to continue the custom of disbursing one Hoon (Pagoda) per month as done previously for each month

in future also. This order to you, should be given effect to from this day the 11th June 1793 A.D. The date of issuing this order to you is 17th June 1793 A.D.

(Sd.) T. Munro

### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Yet it could not break the caste system itself.
- <sup>2</sup> This is true of other areas of Portuguese occupation. Dr. Henry Scholberg, 'The Records of the Portugal India—Some untapped Sources'—summary of the Paper presented at the annual conference of the Institute of Historical Studies, held at Panaji, Goa, October 1975.
- <sup>3</sup> This is corroborated by a Latin letter dated 1542 A.D. now extant with Fernedo of Manapad.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> St. Francis Xavier's letter from Malacca addressed to Fr. Nurey, 1552.
- <sup>6</sup> *Corrotrative* evidence available in Hornell : *The Sacred Change of India*.
- <sup>7</sup> For details about pearl fishery please see S. Arunachalam, *The History of Pearl Fishing of the Tamil Nadu*, Annamalai University, 1949, *Passim*.
- <sup>8</sup> Family Records of Roche Victoria Family presented to the Dutch and later to the English (1782). Report to the Regional Committee for survey of Historical Records, Madras, 1962.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> Family records of Koreas of Quilon, and also see R. Sathyanatha Iyer, *The Nayaka of Madura*, pp. 12, 25.
- <sup>11</sup> *T. P. Meenakshi Sundaram Commemoration Volume*, Annamalai Nagar, 1961, p. 4.
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. 10 above.
- <sup>13</sup> Report on the records of the Portuguese involvement in the Tamil Country, R.C.S.H.R., Madras.
- <sup>14</sup> Fr. E. R. Hamby who knows Dutch and is engaged in writing the history of Christianity.
- <sup>15</sup> Olai Suvadi granting permission to the Dutch to have an ware-house at Alwartirunagari, a Brahmin village (filed as exhibit in a case against the Muslims of a neighbouring village, before the sadar adalat court, Tuticorin, 1796).
- <sup>16</sup> List of Dutch records Ecclesiastical—M.R.O., Madras, 1976.





